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Editor's Note:
In *PR* 4, 1985, in *The Freudians in Germany*, Edith Kurzweil referred to a German analyst who "had finished his training at the Berlin Goering Institut in 1941." He has informed us that he became a candidate in training at Hamburg, and only after World War II. Our apologies.

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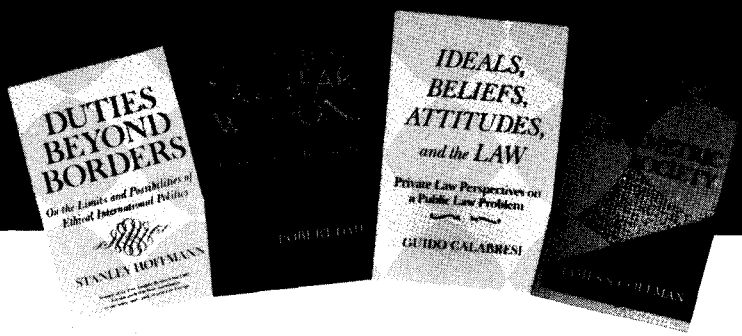
Who decides?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FICTION

Philip Roth

HIS MISTRESS'S VOICE

I feel the hurry-up thing choking me, having to move along faster, that I have to do something I can't begin to do. The fine line gets finer. I was roaming around thinking I ought to call him, but it's ridiculous. I've been talking to him all day anyhow. I'm going to wear myself out going on like this. All circuits busy. Impulses flying out and you couldn't believe how bad some of them are. My dumb confusion. My excess. I couldn't stop and yet wondered what I was doing. Betrayed and I'm the betrayer. So tight was the net and so meshed. I don't think he understands me at all. Simplify my life. Make myself controlled and disciplined. Restraint. Judgment. Thinking. Less impulse. Less hysteria. Less me. Always less of. But there's so much, so infinitely much abounding, and yet everything's under a pile of crap. It was a great mistake in general, but specifically it's sickening. I rushed in, touched it, and thus this: the definitive experience of getting fucked-up. Excess and illusion. "An education. You learned something," he said. But what's all the preparation *for*? His letter arrives. I start reading from the signature backwards up the page to the top of the back page when I flip it over and begin reading from the bottom back up to the front until I finally come to my name. Then I sit down and read it like a person. Then I drive a nail through it and hang it on the wall. A rapist was in the courtyard one night and somebody's dog chased him. He was doing three women a night. The police caught him two doors down from here. Omens are happening. This is your behavior, they say. Dogs chasing rapists. Iron folding gates at the edge of the shops. Filthy streets. Only in those silly places, expensive restaurants, is there the sense that nothing's happened. A hundred dollars a head for dinner and hateful smug waiters who know who owns who. Everything else is berserk. I can't eat. This is the least of it. This isn't finished by any means. Hating myself for being so mediocre. This private soap opera I have going—the rage and slop, I hate it.

I thought if he was brilliant I'd be in some way protected, safe, preserved. There was nothing realistic about this. I'm not very good

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at reality. I don't care who the governor is. I don't know the price of anything. If the world flies off in ten thousand directions, that's to be expected: I just don't want to have to *worry*. Or to be ashamed. He was such a nice man with a fine sense of humor and I just kind of greased in on a smug yes. Extremely embarrassing. I hate telephones. I can't talk on them. It's like talking to myself because I do that all the time anyway. Then I wake up with the thunder on and reach for the phone. Always phoning. Writing seventy-six letters a day. My apologetic and in-error self. I am the dumbest, illiterate, babbling incontinent who ever walked or breathed. My great weakness is believing against my own inclinations. I get blown around, like a leaf, very mindless, because it doesn't make that much difference to me who wins. How I have to please them in the effort to have them help! I have to wait and lurk inside myself before I dare say anything. To pipe up and speak is a danger for me because then I will be attacked. To keep pleading—and have it overlooked! Impulsive and thoughtless and wrong. Always face to face with some urgent thing, our noses touching, inescapable the face glued to mine. I liked him. He scared me at first but I liked the room and the books and the lighting. The books. I liked the way it smelled and I was grateful. I can live, but you'd be amazed how shitty it is. I had envisioned it joyous and light. If you wait long enough and have enough breath to hold, sometimes you get a break, a big, nice, lovely, rather amazing surprise. I've been holding my breath for a man like him for ten years. It's not the end of the world, but it's a blow. The wrench it gave me, walking out that door. I will completely pull out of being berserk and go over and close the window. It's only the first floor anyway. To roll all the way down hill and at the bottom get smashed on enormous rocks, no, not for this. He despises, *despises*, what charmed him most. It was like bringing a tubercular lung to a great TB specialist who hates tuberculosis. Don't worry about it, the astrologer says: by 1995 it'll all be better. That it will: I'll be old and ugly and weakened, and, with all my talents wasted, I'll really need it then. By comparison this will be hedonism then. All he said was that it wasn't enough. I asked him if I was hopeless and he didn't even answer. Which is the answer. I personally don't think I'm all that bad, even though, in entirely new ways, I regret enormously what I am. My wishes tease me tease me tease me. All I want is oxygen.

The old story of who my father was and who my mother was and who I was. That old story and its ramifications. My mother. My

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instant life conceived in that sham place. Dracula eats at her house when he's in town. He comes from a nice happy household with a mother who cooked and a father who worked and stood for brushing teeth and doing homework and represented sanity and order—a calamity at his house was missing his lunch. What could he know of the horror of all horrors? Depression. The sleeping, the drinking, the self-hate. I was scared to death of my mother. What happens to them in the morning waking up. The doom that waking up is for them. The silences. The apology. The hideous efforts to make it up to you and they can't. I have a key to an apartment which I never sent back because the thought of sending it back filled me with my mother's face and her rages. The insults she spits when she forgets herself. In her blur the faces get mixed but she still fires away. The emotional temperature of her conversations, especially drunk and maudlin. Wild with no justification, rages, drunk—unbelievable. I am afraid of high-powered people and their tendency to get carried away. I never told him of that key because he would hammer away at me to send it back *this morning.* I feel pity mostly for so much greed and avarice and self. I don't even hate her anymore. I say this not in my defense because I don't give a shit about that. It's just knowledge, some of which I can use. I just want to keep as far away from the cruelty as I can. The death-mother. The whole atmosphere of a family that allows something like this to go on. The destruction of a girl by a selfish, brutal, wooden mother. My strong tarantula mother, all iron in green silk. In her cups and flying. A woman without walls. The father is only known through the mother's hatred of him. The trouble with the human race is rotten mothering. And no fathers. The instant attraction and obsessive clinging and violent loving—all protection against my mother. I got gypped out of mother-love. I don't know from dick about theory: that is just the plain truth, the undercurrent of this twisted thing. There are mothers and daughters who love each other, and need each other, and will always need each other's love. Not her. I ran out into the world and I held my nose and jumped in, and that's the whole story. I haven't survived her at all. I just stuck it out past childhood, and here I am, still flapping around. And still waiting for her to wise up and be human. A need not to lose my mother any more than I have. I take that broken woman to lunch and try not to listen to a word she says. Her basic madness is by now a little on the boring side, but her voice—that voice! Still the voice of my demon, so completely the voice of a woman who tortures people in a particularly hair-raising mindless way. People don't get better as

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they get older, the task gets harder and they get worse. You can barely register compassion for her. She won't have it. Grotesque. Hideous. She sends me birthday cards and gives me Christmas presents and, innocent of all malice, wants me dead. Her rival, her enemy—her sitting daughter duck. This isn't paranoia, it's the truth. Although it's entirely possible to become paranoid because you know the truth. She flies at me. For reasons unrelated to anything even remotely real. And when I come to her house to see what all the cursing and screaming is about, she asks me to go home. I have prepared my speech too. "I know I was born when you were a baby yourself. What could you know? And the responsibility was so immense. But all you have to be is kind to children and eventually they will make out fine. At worst they will be angry, which is fair enough—who isn't? Who ever got enough? But eventually they're thirty and get the idea and come back. Don't make children hate you forever. You can do the exact same thing with kindness and with judgment as you can with harshness and shouting. Harshness may serve us all in a pinch, but it is not to be confused with wisdom, Mother. As Sophie Tucker says on that record you love, "It ain't watcha do, it's the way hatcha do it." But she tells me go home. "Three hour lunches," she screams, "three hour dinners, hairdresser, pedicure—the way I used to whip around!" She's off her rocker again. Last night she called to tell me that for one week not one person told her that she was pretty. No dignity. No dignity, which is everything. When there isn't dignity, there's stupidity, and stupidity is very harmful. A staid, matriarchal, proper rich lady, white hair, the essence of elegance and country club elbowing, is not what I'm asking her to become; just someone, who when I listen to her, doesn't make me constantly incensed. I cannot listen to what she is saying. I cannot listen to such narcissistic things! The lack of maternity positively radiates—it's brilliant. She hasn't got any even for men. Still, after a long silence, I will always call. To make sure there is no growth to the malignant feeling. There is sometimes a message from her on my machine. Her voice is gurgling up in black bubbles like those pictures you see of oil wells right before the old timer shouts "Eureka!" and waves his hat. "My hair! You should see my hair! Eight hour cream from Elizabeth Arden! It's a miracle!" But the message isn't that reasonable usually because usually the creams don't work. "You are a very brave girl with a very heavy burden," I tell her machine, "a person of enormous fairness and integrity," and hang up. My whole life I was always careful, clammed it with her because it was always safer than getting caught

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in her vile sweep. But surely you have to abandon it somewhere. I should compose a letter. And then send it. "Dear Madam: Enclosed please find one woman's head. Saw it the other day while out for a walk and immediately thought of you. The skin is very smooth, no blemishes, and the skull still pretty hard for something you just stumble upon in the gutter. Still good for a little bashing. The teeth are the finest quality, mined in South Africa, and can be worn strung from a tongue around the neck. Put in the attic or down the cellar, who knows when you might have the desperate need of one to take to bed with you one night, and your dealer when you call will be completely sold out." Went to dinner with my mother the other night. She dwarfs everything. When I came home I thought I'd been poisoned. It was the nightmare of the season. Wiped out for a week. No, my mother was never much help.

These days the unbearable uncertainty is so magnified. The hole it's left. But there were some nice advantages too. I walk in there. He is a stranger to me. I'm in my racoon coat and bandanna and not even lipstick. I don't even have to wear it. We are completely strange to one another and we have no common link. I won't show my fear. Give him the gamin face, the face swallowed up by the bones and the eyes, but serene. Much more mature than he might have guessed. He's autonomous and so am I. And in the middle is the riddle. It's still not decided what procedure is required. What will we call it and how long will it last? Like a black girl and a white boy dating each other, talking about everything else. What it really comes to is that there are advantages and there are disadvantages always, but I think then that the advantages are, in the main, largely, greater. This could make my winter, I think. He spoke about his feelings and he spoke of great writers and he quoted awfully good things, and the mood was uplifting and intimate. I was glad I was there to hear it. He kind of outlines concepts and lets them go. Very exciting. And I was willing, no matter how long it would take or how arduous the job. I wasn't putting him on the spot, but if he was willing, and he felt even half as much as I did that it was a grand idea, I would, without asking anything of him, go no further with anything else, I would concentrate on this, I would ask everyone else to stop. I liked him so and he said my remarks were courageous—courageous!—which pleased me but I didn't understand it. He said I had "a strange integrity." He said he wasn't accustomed to speeches like that from women looking like me, which I also liked a lot, I must say. He defi-

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nitely wasn't thinking, "My brand new maniac." I felt especially clear about myself then and what I was aiming for. No more days and nights of amusement and distraction. I have spent enough years in waste. I might be wrong, it's just an idea, but an exciting one. I wonder if I'm not very *possible.* I said, to be seductive, "Into the waves, one at a time." But he told me not to do anything. Okay, I would sit tight. We shall see. I hate the words "go away." Someone says "going away" and I shit. I get so itchy in my usual well-organized fashion. *I want to have it so much. I can't stand it.* Patience. Imagine such a word in my vocabulary. It stings of deprivation, just the sound. I was the woman. Heady. Delicious. The only woman. Sitting tight. It's an experience. To be seductive, I said, "Have I had my interview?" and to be seductive, he said, "You are wearing fantastic shoes." However, maybe I should do it myself, I thought. Crank it out myself instead. To find some surcease from all the men looming in my mind. I see a bedraggled, perspiring woman in a hot room cranking a machine, feeling crappy and uninspired, one hand revolving this rickety machine, and it pleases me. "I cranked it out myself," I tell him. That's really a lure. But an illusion too. She says to him, "You've given me an awful lot, I'm terribly appreciative, but I just thought that it might be better all around for everyone if I could kind of crank it out myself." When I came back I found his letter. I sensed him in it and it made me feel hungry, yet I couldn't phone. I had to write with a pen to put me in closer touch, or at least it felt that way. The phone is so between. It was better with the pen, though it too is between, of course. I left blasted and weak. I called from the station, couldn't help myself, not another step unaided. He wanted to know where I was. I said I was at my astrologer. One can't extract from it the devastation, I told him, but I'm beginning to understand that it's all part of the process. Everything is. He asked again, "Where are you?" I said, "Taking a bath." The third time he asked, I told him. "Victimized by the phenomena." Oh, I'm scared of my stupidity these days. The only benefit to come out of depression is weight-loss. No effort. I'm down ten pounds already and jump at loud noises. I keep failing to be praiseworthy. To walk down the street feeling praiseworthy. To talk to people feeling praiseworthy. Shake my hand, I'm praiseworthy. Light this praiseworthy woman's cigar. It's all very new to me, having to use my own head. It's the last thing in the world I depend on. I mean it's simple: he's weary of me. All feelings and no meat. It's something I've heard before. His steely kind of fairness. All the intelligent things he says. The poignant way he tunes in so

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utterly breaks my heart. His concern. That intense face of his. I like him. I *believe* him. Seven thousand piles of paper and the writing on it all in blood—that's my mania for myself. My upbringing. *That* took courage. I don't think he understands what to do with me. I'm confusing to such an orderly mind. He thinks I have so far to go and I have gone so far! To change, to become someone else would be greatly welcomed, but I don't think it was ever possible. I did a fandango in the hall after his letter came. I don't think I exhaled while reading. Every single comma the best thing under the sun. I almost passed out. My astrologer will see great things in this letter: the slop is gone, she'll say. All you need is to let your hair grow back in and you are on your way. I'm afraid of him. I was mildly afraid all along. Oh, the flailing out and the attempt to do something! And it goes where it wants anyhow! It was on a Friday, couldn't get out of bed. When I finally did I went into the bathroom and cut off my hair. A kind of plague came over me, then it's gone like it came. But blindly driving inward with it, there's the agony. To spring the trap with suicide, with hemmorhaging down my belly to the floor—that's the terror. It's the distant bell tolling—it devastates me.

I had a nosebleed from laughing, reading his letter. Never had one before. But I sat up in the bed reading with this downpour. It must have been the third time I read it. Reading it so many times because I love it, that's all. Particularly the end, his name there blazing away. In the afternoon when I'm falling asleep at four on the sofa, I hear his letter breathing safely by my side. Sofas are better than beds. Safer. I love sleeping on them. I could sleep in a second on anyone's sofa, but not on anyone's bed. I told him my old story. He wasn't bored by it. You feel when he listens how in touch he is with that part that isn't fooling. One sequence in particular he liked a lot. He said it was an exquisite performance on a dime. Which meant my scope wasn't big enough for him. I suppose he'd prefer some huge and possibly fatal hemmorhage. I said, "You know, who ever thinks things out cerebrally? Certainly not I." Gentlemen prefer "I." What he did was simply talk to me in a very broad, large way. Great scale, and I drifted away from him in a kind of pink freeze. Keep away from debauchery, I told myself. Stay away from the zillionaire. Stay away from the pilot. Stay away from the D.A. I had a wild fight with the D.A. on the phone. I ran outside and vomited right near the back door. Kind of gave up for a moment. I was outside of myself, floating, a bit detached, remembering what people said about the D.A. It'll never work, they said, he loves to kill people

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and she loves to fuck. I hadn't seen him in a long time and I hadn't fucked with him either. It was all settled but painful, but then I couldn't do it—I had dinner with him twice and realized there was no escape. It added up almost mathematically to more than I could resist—so I went back. What can I do about human contradiction? I didn't invent it. He takes it as a compliment when one of his girlfriends tries to kill herself. Men are so crazy: all they worry about are their dicks falling off. They revere two things: their dicks and motherhood. That's it. The pawn I am to some perversity that exists deep in the systems of men! The D.A. says there are only two kinds of women in the world, crazy or boring, and that his preference is definitely towards the crazy. He takes me to the fights in very high heels. One's feet pay the price for all that leg, but the higher I am the wilder he gets, so why not? To the fights, first row ringside so we can smell them sweat. The Cuban got knocked down. I saw him roll for a second like a bug, and no one was revolted or disgusted, the crowd warm and cheerful, having a good time. Everything unmasked there about mankind's fun. The parties he takes me to. Rich Jews and fags. Second-rate painters. Airhead showgirls. Deplorable human beings. Sewage people. All of their noise and glitter and derangement and destruction, and the degrading quality instantly apparent. Red rugs and gold walls. Pukes and fuckers and dirty asses. Lives built on nothing but names and labels and brands and status and deals. All very hateful. Got drunk with the hostess's husband, a very dirty bathing-suit manufacturer morbidly attached to cigarettes. Plying me with gin, and the D.A. found me under a table; he said with my tits hanging out. Worse, he said. The manufacturer kissing me on the lips and mauling me in my very very expensive dress that was drenched with his slobber and ruined. The D.A. said that I was drunk and uproarious, "hideous, drunk, messy, raunchy, and bad," and that afterwards I was singing to the doorman in a disgusting way, and that he could no longer stand for it. STAND FOR WHAT? I want to know! Stand for what! *Him?* He is a powerhouse prosecutor, but privately he lies, to himself and to me. He's secretive and tough and manipulative and deranged. Fucking and lusting and treason—mean, savage, and deranged to the bone. The pawn I am! The maddening part I played in it myself! When you're skidding on ice, some chauffeur once told me, don't use the brakes at all, but don't ignore them either. Pump them, fast if you haven't much space to stop, slowly if you have the time and the room. But pump them—*keep pumping them.* Well, I don't. I call him back and make peace with him

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because I hate things left unsettled. The unreasonable need I have for civility if nothing else. Civility with a man who is insidious and craven. I would call him back and he would take me to a dirty movie where I bend over and blow him. Thrilling to be arrested with a D.A. in my mouth. An officer of the court. I have no feelings that stop halfway. Savagely captured. Though sometimes I am looking out the window while waiting for him to come. God, all that choking. Yet sometimes I don't think I do it *enough*, whatever I am obsessed with doing. I didn't call him back. There is enough shit waiting for you in life without this. In a few weeks he'll call me or he won't, but it doesn't matter. My entire life I've been in a cage, the prey to some panicked need of my own. But I can honestly say that I see life changing. I see the rope ladder. To become an old lady who has lived ferociously and has not gone off her noodle would be worthwhile too, but I am going to have a husband, thought I, drifting away in my pink freeze. I'm not necessarily looking forward to it, it's just going to happen one of these days. Homemade bread. Soup stock. Appliances. His feet. His shirts. The old-time virgin's dream of ecstasy. I am going to have a husband and live with him in the way the Bible says. Once and for all I am going to opt for silence. Babies and breast-feeding. Cookbooks. Cats. Car pools. The price of eggs and butter. Conventional marriage, which I despise. It horrifies me, but what does it all mean finally? It's no more stupid than what I've got. Whacking off, and dirty Polaroid pictures, and episodes in the movies, and baby fucks, and mercy fucks, and friendly fucks, and everything in between. My cunt is hollering for a breather. But a husband? Fidelity's a gigantic lie and sneaking a humiliation and betrayal—how possibly a husband? However. This is a decision, not a compromise. If it were a compromise I'd keep having lovers and I'm not going to. The natives, they say, get better-looking all the time when you're stranded on a desert island, so maybe that's the nature of a monogamous marriage. In any event, that's the only thing I have never tried. I don't know why fucking your husband shouldn't count, at least for one or two points. A certain kind of sex, the grateful nice homey fuck, like pot roast and potatoes and just enough gravy to get it down. I keep thinking, what is the truth, how do you find it, how do you trick yourself into not fucking everything up, and I think the answer is to ask yourself WHEN you were happiest; not what makes you happy, but WHEN. If you find out WHEN you find out WHY. I have no morality, as you well know. I don't think anything is right or wrong, coming from where I do. My morality allows for everything. One's

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body should be the morality: listening to what it wants. I understand one thing only: life or death. But a sense of well-being after a certain age, like twenty-five, is a good thing too. I don't hold out much hope for a future of more of myself. The point is that I don't think it's easy to find love, and you have to be careful before you let it go, because that can be the most serious mistake. All of a sudden life is becoming oddly discernible to me—simple. I don't want to go to parties, I don't want to go to movies, I don't want to go out for dinner. I hate parties, you hate parties, if we have to go to any parties it'll be agonizing as all parties are, but I won't ask beforehand who's going to be there, because what the hell difference will it make? I'll just sit near you and you'll tell me all about everyone, and the food'll be great and then, best of all, WE GET TO GO HOME. Released from parties. Christ could bring no greater prize to earth. And no more shoes from Paris. How many dresses can I buy? I don't care about them either. I'll be a volunteer with a little hat and a chiffon scarf. I'll be a wife in a hideous gray row house, Christmas lights, fake reindeer, big glass stars in the windows all year round, macaroni salad for the kids and grilled cheese for me. The house costs eleven thousand dollars, the neighborhood is awful, but anything, anything, as long as I don't have to go to any more parties and blow the D.A. Quit him and get that house on the ugliest street on Long Island. So it's boring. If you don't feel like getting fingered under the table at the Perigord Parc or fucking a goat by some chance one day, if you're tired or have a headache, then you can go home and just sit down and be with someone nice and boring. You can call it boring or you can call it peaceful. All in your attitude. Sit around filling the vacuum together. Marriage as morphine. Boring is just the lack of destruction involved. My husband in his T-shirt and underwear lying beside me in bed reading the ball scores; standing in the foyer in the spring with daffodils and a baby; the husband who smiles and is reliable and is very loving, even if he puts you out for the count at the table; chatting with the lights out under the blankets in bed, icicles on the window, and around me insulating walls of goldfish and children and him. Everything we own making it all less worrisome. Like holing up with your booty in a Swiss bank vault. Tomorrow as predictable as ten years ago. The husband whose presence doesn't let things get worse. Whatever it is, he doesn't bat an eyelash, doesn't change expressions—just puts his arms around it and contains it so it doesn't feel like it's spreading. It snows and that's the big news. My wildest erotic pleasure is taking a bath. We have friends. These people invite us, we invite them, we all

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get drunk, time passes, the cat dies, we get another one, the kids are off to college, I come down in the morning and see him eating breakfast and reading the paper, alone in the kitchen like Willy Loman, until finally, to escape breaking our bones on the ice, we retire to St. Petersburg. Ending in the sun, Mom and Pop. And what in real life can compare to the hope we keep holding out for? There aren't solutions. There will never be all this pretty stuff. Macaroni salad and grilled cheese—that would last about a day. Nothing is giftwrapped and delivered to the door, no matter how much you give up to avoid your traps. Why I didn't like books is because there *are* no plots and there *are* no conclusions and there is no form to life that I can see. Whatever form even is. Still, there is no doubt that I'm doing something wrong.

This is how I thought, drifting away, but what he did, I later understood, was transmit to me important information, and I started seeing where to go. Or seeing illusions again. This stuff in my head moves so fast. It's unbearable thinking about oneself so much. God, this is a full report, but that's the way my mind works, parenthesis after parenthesis. I don't like it either. If works is even the word. I'm so obsessed and snared because I think one man is the answer to all that's wrong, to all the vicissitudes of my experience with bad luck. The sheer strength required to start again and make it stick. The blankets on the beach, the D.A. says. Remember? Fucking in the waves, remember? Come down Friday night and have your heart sliced open. No! Being the tormented cunt no longer interests me! I'm not part of your big scream anymore! I threw all your presents into the fireplace. I lit them. I burned everything. *I don't want you.* Come on down, lovely girl—wear that watery red flowing kind of Hindu thing, wear your legs, your arms, your tits, wear your ass—just do it with me on the phone, babe, now— NO!

What he might be looking for, what he wants to see in me—I'll give it to him. I had marvelous intentions. Meant to make it so impressive. Maybe if I can give him *half* of what he meant— Illllllusions! The child's voice and the child *has to go.* But even if it isn't here, I think I grasp enough in general to inch myself up to working out what my flaws really are. The lady at the liquor store put it correctly when she told me that to amount to anything in this world you have to have "finish-itus." Very late last night I started to do it, very heartlessly. But it could take another twenty years. To keep myself in a

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calm, quiet, and dull situation, this presents tremendous struggles for me. Just the physical aspect is hard and nerve-wracking. Just building it correctly with him. He was very subtle, very responsible, he doesn't seem to deal too much with what's all right as is. I really do believe he'll like it when I'm done. I feel that he does already. Anyway, that's what's new. Things are fine. Everything is good. My teeth don't hurt, I see 20-20, and I keep not killing myself out of spite. Suicide is remote and out of reach. And such a lure. A lasting, soft, sweetness without any pain forever. I sit on the toilet in the morning lured toward that. Oh, I fight, I fight, but basically it's a very little struggle against very heavy odds. Just a couple of thousand milligrams of something, and that's it. Life is weightless, really. You can just bump yourself off like you're some kind of thug hired to do the job. For years I've been trying to do myself a favor and get unfucked. Sunday afternoon I'll get unfucked. Tuesday morning I'll get unfucked. I'll get unfucked in 1995. That's what the astrologer predicts and she must know. She. I can't talk to women. I can't cry with women. I can't fight with women. I can't get past some superficial barrier that's not even important. I had lunch with some woman just last week. I didn't understand a word she was saying. I think I upset her by admitting that I wasn't of the opinion that men and women were in fact alike. I told her they had practically no common denominator at all. Which she couldn't bear. Fuck her. I scare women away. I believe they see my little excitements as dangerous. Prowling, cruising, looking to get laid. Lusting after detestable parties. Caught in the mess of a lover who can't leave his wife. Hanging around all night to find out what's going on. Hopping rides home. It's not all as gamey as I make it sound, but still I am impelled to these risks. I like women because they *are* women, but they don't matter to me at all. It has to be a man for me. At eighteen I had all the shoes I wanted and five fur coats and hats, not like the girls you knew at eighteen—workhorse students, brave, courageous, academic. School wasn't me. I detested every second. I wanted to be out of buildings as soon as they put me in them. I never did homework, was never in class, never passed a test or "handed in" a thing. If I wasn't sitting in the teacher's lap and she wasn't kissing me when class was over, what good was school? I wrote him eight letters all of which weren't right. I didn't know what was right until this morning. Last night a total daze and blur. Blasted because I was so terrible. He is so far out of touch, interested only in what I'm not. Months and months on my flaws. Telegrams. Reading lists. His evaporating

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patience while I shed the last veil. This horrendous attempt to transform me. It was a job and I complied fully with what I thought were significant changes, some of which I agreed with and some not. But it was an outrageous debasement. I felt dirty and ashamed. He made me feel like a whore, less than a whore, less deliberate, less mindful. He detested my excessiveness. He detested my use of the English language. Most painfully, he detested me. I said once how much I loved Melina Mercouri and he was furious. "She's hysterical! A woman like that is impossible!" He yelled at me so I yelled back. I accused him of hating hysteria. Didn't come to him as a surprise. I said, "You're fifty and you deserve it!" I screamed, "It wouldn't hurt you to have a consultation with someone! I've been too good for too long! I am sick and tired of pumping the brakes! Fucking the pumping brakes! Anyone who goes near you is meaningless!" I don't know how to argue or to win. "Eighty-five percent is as far as I go twisting myself around! Under the dressing table in my bedroom, there's where you'll find the remaining fifteen! Now if I die you'll know where to look!" "No threats," he softly said, even as it occurred to me, what difference could it possibly make what he or anybody thinks when I have my mother to think about?

What I told him the first time was that this was all I had. I had nothing else. I was not an intellectual experience. Reading those letters over and over while sinking in waves of gratitude. Cramped, stifled, restrained, and I have doggy gratitude! Always doing something someone else decrees! Now for the strange part. I liked what I'd done for him. I had done something that was proper and correct. I have shuddered sometimes to remember myself so completely asunder. It made me cringe. Not knowing all the time. I have no standards except what someone gives me. I believe the last person who speaks even if he is an imbecile. Don't ask me why. I have feelings and a will to please and I haven't got *judgment.* Everybody yelling at me that I'm too easily influenced, and my crying, "Yes, yes, you're right!" Anything to shut them up. I need only one person to shout at me, to boom, and if there are two, I'm destroyed. The terrible apology for oneself. I try washing it away the best I can, but I beg. A beggar. I'm ashamed of this. Always I seem to be dealing with brokers: they've got me coming and going on every lousy transaction. The claws are always there. How can I know about bigger things? I have no war with errors. I allow for imperfection. It's real. It's the truth. The world is created and lacquered with imperfection. What's "ex-

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cellence"? Where did it come from? Why don't people take their time before they start complaining? This nice man thinks I ought to be excellent. It must be fun expecting things like that. This woman ought to be excellent. This wine is excellent, this book is excellent, these shoes of mine are excellent, why isn't this woman excellent? The inner life. It's rabid. Running all over and nobody can catch it. You get it by the tail and it bites its tail off and goes. Rabid and running. A humbling experience, the inner life. Everybody should have one. They might not be so quick to complain. That's where things are really happening. A mile a minute as folks used to say. And only the day before he said it was really looking good. Enormous raving praise from him who is usually so responsible even with praise. Now I want to stand in a corner and yell. Send a telegram. "Sir: The world is not filled with women who you can love, it's only filled with women you can fuck or get fucked by but good; unless this is the opportunity you have been waiting for to get out, you might want seriously to reconsider your position. Letter follows." Four martinis and now I want to go to Mexico in exactly five minutes. The only saving grace is the awful quiet. I can't see how this is going to help. Revenge is what I'm entitled to.

All his work on me. Fiddling with the psychopath while Rome burned. It was great fun in the beginning too. The suffering slowly stopped. I wasn't dead anymore. How much I wanted it and how fast. I said to him, "I love your expertise, I love watching you attend to every last detail. I want to salt and pepper your expertise, tear it in pieces and eat it. There's something so cohesive all around you, permanent and rooted and nonchaotic. So professional about yourself, so absolutely on target. Objective. Every time I'm with you, I'm awed by the sweep you have. You struggle with what the vast majority would be unwilling even to peep at. You have a ferocious sense of correctness. You are completely not-fooled. You never back off. You are ethics to your marrow. So brilliant and good and thorough. When you say anything, I listen. I get a new dimension about everything. So many things to start me thinking. You whiz along so fast that at one point I almost was passing out. I knew if I fainted it would alarm you, and anyhow would be rude, so I held on. Sheer life for me, your genius and your gifts. You're not a man you're a milestone. In you the sum and substance of human capacity is told exactly. Nothing greater on the scales. I'm sorry if this will cause you alarm, but I see happiness as having you, the awesome judge. Maturity and genius.

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I can't believe anything is better. An end to all the forbidden elements and clandestine aspects. To all those insane fuckers and their malicious perversions. To all the little people who get where they want by attacking me. One's mother, for example. Detachment, which I begin to get an inkling of watching you. It isn't *confusing* here. It's daylight. I said, "I think we should go to Colorado and become legally brother and sister. You can apparently become anything legally in Colorado. Men marry men and people marry their dogs out there, I hear. You would be happy if I were your sister. We could give serious assistance when needed, and fuck each other with added spice. Better still, you could just adopt me. Please take me to Colorado." He said, "Yes, Colorado sounds like the state to live in." He has a terrific face, good taste, is beautifully-spoken, elegant, refined. So intense. In those good old days when I sat across from him and he was so funny. Holding my muff with his face buried into it in that terrific hat he wears. He said to me, "Miss, you evidence a strong desire to stay here overnight." Living twenty times the size of life. Creeping around in the morning seeing how dismal I look from the slant of light through his bedroom shutters. Some old lady who's been through everything twice. I kissed him sleeping. "Thanks," I said, "for making sure I can't die."

The sun can be enormous in the morning. I loved leaving his building with sunglasses on. I felt like a hooker and I think the cab driver thought I was because he didn't speak to me. Cab drivers don't like hookers, I guess; don't know why. I'd go home and call him seven hundred times. My fire department. "I miss you unreasonably, enormously, and I only just left. I feel hungry to send you something. I am in the grips of enormous good fortune. We are, I know, such different people. I am all cowardice, dragging old chains, and you are so unfraudulent and brave. I don't even know how you got that way. I could never do it. But I will. I will!" Well, I had a time and that time is over. With men there seems to be a warranty. You get thirty days or thirty months, and after that it's too late. But what about the long pull? Shortchanged in the long pull. He asked for a lot and I did a lot of what he suggested. I think all any woman or any person is afraid of is losing someone or being cuckolded. I read books. He said, "The artist is the custodian of the fantasy life of people, and the fantasies of people determine everything." It was a reason for reading no one mentioned before. He hands me *Harper's Magazine*, which has to be the most deadly piece of writing ever calculated to

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kill the reading public's evenings, the next best thing to Nembutol. I go home, read it, fall asleep eight million times, come back weary and yawning and tell him I learned a lot lot more than I ever did from *Vogue.* I bought books, dozens of paperback books. I discovered prefaces. You find out everything in the preface from someone whose life is devoted to understanding. You get that gift, you save time, and you understand what the fuck is going on. I became a preface fiend. I discovered cemeteries, those quiet places without a person anywhere, just birds chirping, and I drove out there and read. If anybody saw me in a cemetery reading I would be suspect, but you have to do it only once to understand. Parks now are noisy and ugly, traffic is everywhere, people reach up your skirt, but in a cemetery one has the quiet of a golfer, and soon you forget the implication. It's just a pretty, extremely dignified place to be away and read. In the cemetery I finished *Crime and Punishment.* A fine rage book. I began *The Brothers Karamazov*, hoping for more fury. Fury must be the hardest thing to write. It's the hardest thing to sustain. It's the hardest thing to face. Everybody goes around with grudges and immense fury, but all they do is shit on each other as a result. Shit on their friends, their kids, lover. But to separate it out and churn it up into *Crime and Punishment*—bravo. Beyond description. I know what makes writers great. The human dirty subtlety they know all about. The sensitivity storming out of them. The blot-out concentration on their thing. They're like fathers are supposed to be: big, bossy, gluttonous, domineering, positive, emphatic. Reading Dostoyevsky was medicine for me. His grip on me was terrific. The fantasies Dostoyevsky is custodian of are mine. He encompasses everything I learned at my mother's knee. Feet. Throat. Through a madman's book the awful truth. Violence and humiliation, humiliation and violence, and clinging to hatred for dear life. You have to. No one can leave anything without hating it first. Oh, let me be reincarnated as my mother and return to axe the D.A. to death. Carve him up good early one morning and make it to Canada before they open the drawer to his cuff links and find his nuts. Let me come back very self-assured, a very self-assured woman given this by a mother who was the mainstay of her life, which is where courage comes from. No longer abject. Courage in me like a beam of steel. My life has been an attempt to get away from my mother. Enraged with her since babyhood. She implanted guilt in me which is a loathsome trick. I howled in the cab, the guy pulled over, lit a cigarette, listened to my whole life. "Simply unfathomable to me," he said, "why she treated you like that." "She had no choice," I explained, "she is one of those people who never do."

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I'm lonely without my Raskolnikov. Crisis is a violent way to live. Everything magnified. I think Dostoyevsky fell in love with him. I wouldn't have ended the book like that. Can't imagine how a double murder of an old woman and dressmaker by an elitist intellectual didn't get him clubbed to death. If blowing the D.A. taught me anything, it's that justice is bloodthirsty, always. A deranged maniac, a mutant, a savage, he still knows his onions about punishment. He is wild on the subject. And adores crime. Despondent without it. "We haven't had a good shocking trial in this town since X was hired to kill Y's wife and blamed it on the priest." When one of his pals stashed his girl in a closet, the D.A. was crushed. A man considered a friend by a lot of people in the highest moneyed circles. International circles. Consulting for big companies. Someone should have consulted with him before he stashed her in the closet. When they broke through the door they found a skeleton in a bikini and gold chains. I understood that skeleton. This was a man we ate dinner with one or two times a month. So much for one's idea of knowing somebody else. The D.A. hates him not because he killed her but mainly because he didn't confess that he killed her. Shudders at the mention of his name. He says smug bastards like that he could tear up into little pieces, and he made grimacing expressions and fists. I could have handled the punishment better myself. Light sentences are fairy tales. I would have finished Mr. Raskolnikov off right. Though the rage against people who did him no real harm, that I know is human enough. Hate and hatred is what one's alone with. I understand that book: a brilliant loiterer who is suffering immensely. Rage like it was all put to music. Rage like two hundred pounds to lose. Rage sucking you low, dipping you down till you can hardly surface, and when you do you surface crazed. People don't get older, they get enraged. The royal road of rage. A siege of rage. Melancholy and slavery and rage. Dinners, trips, escapades, benders, and rage. All I want is my sleep. Slothing out. The books. Those books. If that's the deal, I'll move to the library. He has a mind. Had a mind since he was a baby. Precise like that since childhood. I did as he instructed. I cut myself back to a stump. To spare him the drudgery I'd do it myself. Rip out whole parts of myself. I cringed for doing what he deplores. Emotion, red light—reason, logic, order, green. No slothing out. Your mind is a little nut that hasn't been cracked. Open sesame and soon, or you're back to being a dart board again. I did my little exercises daily. Read, so I read. Fence it off, so I fenced it in. A titanic effort to *contain.* To make the deal with life, I pretended I was him. Brave, a champion. Playing him, doing exactly what he would

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do. I would make him a magnificent present of myself. I intended to surprise him with it. True, in some places I didn't do all that he suggested because I thought I would still like to do something other than just collect myself and turn into a little thing in a Brownie uniform and cotton stockings. The real race was to see if I could do it before he gave out. I came in second. I set myself a goal of twelve weeks. Working incredible hours. In a terrible rush. Pull it off by Spring! In all the time I bought two fiercely expensive skirts and that—and cutting my hair myself—was the limit of my treacherous madness. But I came in second. I cannot be rescued. I went to Van Cleef and Arpels and sold my jewels. Rings, diamonds, rubies. I watched my bored look in the mirror while they looked them over. In love as I was, I wanted to divest myself of everything cheap, to own nothing, to clean myself out. In the twilight of her sordid life selling all her jewels. Arpels gave me the money and a receipt and I relinquished all that shit: materialism, ownership, possessions, belongings, all my history of debris. I am clean. But came in second. I emptied his ashtrays, cleaned his soap dish, put all his dozens of magazines in order. I would have alphabetized all the books piled everywhere, if I could alphabetize. The best I could do was dust them. And when I finished I stroked his walls. I even dared disagree about a novel. It would show him how I'd advanced, and I meant it besides. "I've been reading *Jude the Obscure* and can't really see why you're so crazy about it. He is a boring, obvious writer. Jude is a dull, absurd character. Sue and Arabella are infantile, predictable, lame. Sue is the most interesting because she is the most perverse, but I like Phillotsen best—an old man with a letch. I'm just halfway, but the only thing that saves it at all is that it reads like a magazine saga." "Wrong," he said—"keep reading." So I did, but came in second. If anyone knew all the magic measures I took to protect him, they wouldn't believe I was civilized. My enormous anxiety about him, my worshipping. *My life rides with this.* Let me stay and fight the match inside the ring! Give me till June! I'll read every night until 4 A.M. Whatever you like I'll do—I'll sit here on my hands or I'll kill your worst enemy, just give me three more months! For what requires another year, I'm asking ninety days! But I cannot be rescued. I had it all together in a backwards kind of way, and now it's undone, and I am defenseless, stripped, and scared, and don't look forward to starting elsewhere. Mr. One-Hundred and Twenty-Seven. Can't. To be the vulnerable seeker again is impossible. Hope so seductive, and then you're abandoned. Not the D.A. Nothing could kill him. Poison made him cheerful. He

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couldn't drown. Fucks thirty women every day and nothing will ever cut him down. But I'm afraid of getting hit by a truck in my bath. I could not do a thing to save myself. If there isn't a great book on this subject there should be. By Dostoyevsky. My next door neighbor's son out there under the streetlamp washing his car. A most remarkable boy. Just seventeen. Handsome, brilliant. Funny. Being sorely tested on my own again. Berserk behavior beckons. He is a little crazy. Is bad. Is wild. My taste for the treacherous. A danger for me. Laughing, claims I tried to seduce him when he was only twelve. The mother knows exactly what is going on, looking out the upstairs window. I lie around naked adding up all my zeroes and being sorely tested. Crawling the walls on all fours. Hot and young, what a combination. Who could relinquish that? Him. His friends. The bunch of them. A Dostoyevsky dream come true. He's already got parking tickets worth five hundred dollars and has had his license all of a month. Parks in front of fire hydrants, so his father tells me. A warning that, to keep my shades pulled down. I don't trust this responsible Dad. When he takes a good look at me he doesn't let on that he's looking. Everyone's the same. I go to my eye doctor. Park Avenue, extraordinary reputation, but he chases me around his optical machines, and, looking through the light at my vessels, feels my tits in the dark. They'll shave my head for this greed. Racked and ruined by choice and greed. They'll brand me, SHE SEES EVERYTHING ACCORDING TO HER NEEDS, and slam me into the stocks. The D.A. will gladly provide penal equipment. But if I cannot be rescued by anything decent, what's to stand in the way of a little disaster with next door's son? In hot pursuit of the protruding male organ. In the good old days before I started taking myself so seriously, there would have been no debate. Where did all the fun go? Very difficult, if not impossible, separating the healthy hedonist from the self-destructive nut. I'm like a person stashed away in a prison. Inside the washing machine with the cycle turned to spin. Where *did* all the fun go? I'm insane tonight. Maddeningly impelled to fuck up. Somebody has pumped a little sickening gas into everything and soon, if I'm smart, I shall pass completely away. I think there's a rat in this room.

I dreaded today. I loved him and am charmed by him and he's funny, but his morality is impossible and his narcissism downright dangerous. A moralistic and repressive person. As far as I can see life's not meant to be an exercise in denial. These responsible people!

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These purists who put things on a higher plane! These great inhibitors! Give me a good truck driver anytime. It ended the instant I walked in. I told myself, bracing myself, "Before I read all those prefaces, I also led a life." But it was quick and terrible. All I kept thinking was, "Not this again. It's vile. There has to be a better ending." He started lightly making fun of me, then he started stiffening my spine. He really cranked it today, saying I had a right to fight, I'm five foot eight and I weigh a hundred and twelve pounds and I shouldn't let anybody scare me in the future. Not with my looks. If there is a future, I put in. He is as guiltless as a hurricane or a flood. No bad intentions. Thirty days in Cuernavaca, I said. Sit in a chair and fry. Like Dillinger. I'll return rested, jolly, and benevolent. I'll go out and buy clothes. Find a new apartment. I'll get through. "Go away. Just a couple of days. It does wonders. To one of those windswept places off a coast somewhere. A little trip to speed up recovery. Try Guadeloupe. The best beaches in the world. The fish swim right up, you can eat every meal on the beach, live there, have accommodations there, the works. They haven't turned it into a condominium yet. It's unspoiled, remote, innocent still. The food's supposed to be as good as Paris. The jewel of the Caribbean. I think you have to go by way of Martinique. Pan Am. A 747. The place to stay there is the Caravelle." "Sounds," I said, awed as always by his thoroughness, "sounds like it might not be half bad." "The major secret of life is," he said. "Yes? The secret?" "Is emphasis. It's where you put the emphasis." I tried to forestall him with tact and control, something I'm not known for. "I know," I said thoughtfully, "but so much energy goes into personal unhappiness. It kind of takes it out of you." "Lucidity," he said, "is more important than happiness, because there isn't any perpetual happiness but there can be perpetual lucidity." "I agree with you almost blindly," I said. "Stop grubbing on the bottom, wordless and desperate, scared of your mother and all men and women. At your age still hiding in the living room curtains." "It's true. My mother gets me so fucked when I take her to lunch, I can't even figure the percent on the bill." "Emotional stamina," he said, "you must have it. Harriet Beecher Stowe," he told me, "had four children and a sick husband and had to do the ironing besides." China, I thought. Peking. Twenty-seven hours in the air and all those hairless Chinese men. I can't see it. I'll be a piece of cantalope rind there too. So I played my last, my only card—to stop this from happening and leaving the hole it would leave. Never back off, be like him—just pretend you're him, the tap root that winds around and around, an-

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choring you down to the heart of the matter. *I don't know what else to do with my life.* "I like my lessons," I say, "I learn something every time. I go away with a clearer idea of simplicity, of taste, of what makes things just right. It's not a measurable amount of learning, nothing that would get me a degree from the Delahanty Institute, but it's quite nice to slip in here and hear about books and life, sort of like a dirty little vice, this little drop of education. Not enough to fill a thimble, I admit, but that's what's so corrupt about it. The whole effort comes down to control, I agree—something I admire so much in you and of course still have personally to achieve. And will. And will! Less spastic and more mature every day!" "You must go away now," he says, unshaken by my charming persistence and the fact that through his trousers I'm touching his dick. "Look, it isn't entirely stupidity that's my problem. There is a large dose of high spirits, too. When one gets into trouble, it's never the bad times, really—it's the good. It's the high spirits you have to watch out for. They cause more chaos than the depressions. They just kill you. I'm a person who has no feelings that stop halfway. Alas, that's my story." "You really must go now," he says. "Listen, I take everything back I said about *Jude.* The last part of that book was something. It haunted me. I'm not saying I'm crazy about Thomas Hardy, I certainly don't see him in the same league with Dostoyevsky. With Dostoyevsky there's a certain feeling that there's nothing missing, he's seen it all. Still, the last part of *Jude*—what an indictment of marriage! The characters come to life finally, and Sue was magnificent. The last page was extraordinary. 'She's never found peace since she left his arms.' It's the truth, and there you are. The truth, to me, is what novels are for. Poor Jude," I said. "What else shall I read?" I asked. Those were my concluding words. He just said it again, getting up this time to lead me to the terrible door that opens out on my zero existence: Take a 747. Go away.

Well, not only am I not sulking, not slitting my throat, I feel fine and glad and feel even free. I had to take stock this morning which wasn't hard and didn't take long. The discomfort sustained has been fruitful. I agree with you and I know that you are right. You soar above whatever you meant to me before. Go away. My thousand errors are forgiven in those two words. Go away. Your stamp and your blessing. For you to have said stay would have confused me. Inwardly, where my real doubts were, I would have been forever mistrustful of my judgment. The point is that I knew but wasn't cer-

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tain I was right. My objectivity is you. My standard is you. My conscience is you. My best friend is you, beside which I adore you. I trust you more than I trust myself. You couldn't be more correct. The grief is real, time has done a lot, but still I stand corrected. Thanks for giving me a push and doing all you did, but I will not hang around anymore. If you ever want a kidney or seven teeth or an eyeball, they're yours. I disappear like a submarine. I go.

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WRITERS ON THE BARRICADES: THE PEN CONGRESS

Czeslaw Milosz

WRITERS AND UTOPIAS

In one of the nineteenth-century novels we find the character of a scientist who makes a discovery with enormous importance for the future of mankind, promising universal peace and harmonious relations between the nations of the planet. Namely, he discovers a metal lighter than air. This means that one would be able to fly. Consequently, distance between countries and continents would disappear and, consequently, there would be universal peace.

Today we are amused by the silliness of such an expectation. *And yet*, let us recognize that the planet Earth became small thanks to man's ability to fly. The gradual unification of this small globe is the reverse side of all the horrors and dangers threatening it. This shows that utopias often become realities but always with some ironic twist of that big prankster—history. At the same time we may measure distance separating the twentieth century from the nineteenth century. For our great-grandfathers' utopias were in the future, whether we judge by the first works of science fiction, which has since grown pessimistic, or by a book seminal for the revolution in Russia, Nikolai Chernyshevsky's *What Is To Be Done?*. Our century is that of utopias being implemented, with a very curious division of the earth into the areas which live in a postutopian era and those which have not had such an experience. And here I approach the question of writers and utopian thinking. I do not quite agree with the main topic of this conference as it infers the writer's estrangement from the state. In this century a basic stance of writers, wherever they live, seems to be an acute awareness of suffering inflicted upon human beings by unjust structures of society. And, since our planet is growing very small, that awareness extends to continents and islands remote from the native town of a given writer. This awareness of suffering makes

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a writer open to the idea of radical change, whichever of many recipes he chooses. But the change can be implemented only by the state. Thence, not the opposition to the state but fascination with the state is perhaps the characteristic feature of the contemporary writer. And if that love is often or mostly unhappy, it is not because there is a lack of ardor on the part of the writer.

The writer's hostility is directed against the state if the state does not offer a utopian promise, in other words, if it exists to perpetuate the status quo of suffering and injustice. In the postutopian areas this means the force of inertia, of immobility, making the state "*la chose*," the thing. In preutopian or nonutopian areas this means the state that refuses to intervene in the mechanisms of the market.

Let me change my topic here and say a few words on censorship. Censorship is not only an affair of the state. Writers themselves have proved in this century to be masters in silencing those of their colleagues who trespass the tacitly accepted norms of behavior. Truth about certain facts is avoided because it would sound crude, tactless and harmful. György Konrád spoke here of a *chiaroscuro* surrounding the consequences of Yalta for half of Europe. But such examples of not calling a spade a spade can be observed in many other cases, and it is especially depressing when it is applied to blur the notion of the writer's responsibility.

Innumerable millions of human beings were killed in this century in the name of utopia—either progressive or reactionary, and always there were writers who provided convincing justifications for massacre. It is difficult to understand why the poetry of Ezra Pound has been separated from his having extolled publicly the crime of genocide, while that poetry is permeated by his philosophy that logically led to his actions. Pound hated capitalistic America in the clutches of *usura*, as he termed it, and he looked for a utopian solution. To take another tack, readers of George Orwell's essays and letters discover his loneliness in telling the truth about the Russian totalitarianism system, as he was breaking a taboo of the majority of the British intelligentsia. A classical case of a debate around writers' self-imposed censorship was the controversy opposing Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Today we are still divided into two camps —those who think Sartre was right and those who think Camus was right. Recently I read, in a French translation, an article by a West German literary critic glorifying Sartre for his assault on Camus, but not mentioning what was really at stake. Camus's offense was mentioning the existence of gulags. Sartre was concerned with injus-

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tice in his world and unwilling to pity millions of victims sacrificed in the name of a presumed historical necessity.

The number of writers who at one or another point in their careers provided a smokescreen for inhumanity is great indeed, and most often they acted with the best intentions. Nobody keeps account of their names, but it is useful, perhaps, at this conference, to puncture a self-induced pride of our profession and to call for watchfulness.

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Adam Zagajewski

FREEDOM IN EXILE

My statement will be short, but divided into two parts.

Part 1: Freedom of Expression

I'm living in Paris now, but I keep observing the situation in my native country, in Poland. You may measure it by asking how many of your friends are imprisoned. Adam Michnik, a friend of mine, a brilliant writer, is in prison. Marian Terlecki, a young and not very known writer and journalist, is in prison. Some of my friends are still free. I keep watching it because there is no excuse for forgetting the fate of your friends. It is quite simple. You need not be a writer to be conscious of it. You need not be an artist to know that there are at least two different incarnations of the state nowadays: totalitarian states and democratic states. It is impossible to say something which would not be stupid or meaningless about the state, without distinguishing at least two types of that beast, the state. The same is true for politicians. I have a lot of respect for nontotalitarian statesmen. Men of action and of responsibility—why should I consider myself better or wiser than they are? They are in quite a different position. I make drafts; I am free to reconsider my draft, to change it, to destroy it. It may take a month, or a year, to compose a poem. But politicians cannot make drafts; they have to act immediately, taking an immense risk of error.

Freedom of expression is an Orwellian subject, and Orwell deserves his worldwide fame. But there is a problem. While watching and checking and controlling whether freedom of expression is being maintained, we may lose something. Even Orwell had to pay a price for his political vigilance. Wasn't he, as a prose writer, a little bit too pedantic, too matter-of-fact?

I may admire some politicians, but for their actions, for their courage, not so much for their imagination, their language, their vocabulary. Freedom of expression is vital, but it may be dangerous for us to become only vigilant controllers of others' deeds and sins. There is appearing a new race of intellectuals—controllers of the

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situation of freedom. I share their interest and their anxiety; I am one of them, and, at the same time I am against them, because I do not always share their vision of literature.

Part 2: Expression of Freedom

Now to the exile. *Is it* different nowadays from what it was in the past? I am quoting one of the phrases which is the starting point of our discussion. I think that the situation of exile doesn't change its bitter taste throughout the centuries. Now there is the telephone, which produces an illusion that frontiers may be crossed. Of course the state is behind it, like a film director; the totalitarian state. But the situation of exile may produce a paradoxical effect of freedom. You live in a foreign country and you do not belong to its society. You are a stranger and your estrangement has its positive sides too. Do you remember Nabokov in Berlin, writing *The Gift*, full of joy, conscious of his creative power? Being in exile, living abroad, you are not in touch with your friends, you are cut off from your native city, but the reality is with you. You are with men and women, you may contemplate trees, birds and clouds. You are free and, if you are a writer, you may try to express your freedom. And expression of freedom is equally as important as freedom of expression. It has something to do with the very notion of reality. We are living in a bizarre time, where no general notion of reality exists, no wisdom. There are millions of facts, of bits of information, but no wisdom, no knowledge of reality. But being in exile is not a tragic situation. Do not despair. In the act of writing you may touch a reality that is deeper and stronger than the everyday reality of common sense. For a short moment you are more powerful than the emperor, who sent you abroad, or who prevents you from coming back to your city. It is not a dream only, it's not an illusion. For a moment you are the emperor, and how rich. It is imagination that helps you. Imagination—a way to reality, not an escape from it. The next day you may forget it, you may lose your magical power of words and images, but for a short time you are in the center of reality. And you communicate it, there is a poem or an essay, beaming traces of your instantaneous knowledge. Because freedom is knowledge. A very impractical knowledge, of no use for politicians or doctors or whomever. Here is my country, in this reality of a poem. It is our country, I would say, the writer's country. Its citizenship may be easily obtained by everybody who wants to read, to think, to see. To this extent I cannot be in exile, except for these bad weeks or months, when I do not succeed in discovering the reality.

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Of course I know that there is this very special temptation—to be interested in politics rather than in the reality of human experience. Because there is no general wisdom, no plausible theory of the world, we may be tempted by political exercises, by poor political language. We, powerful in our unpractical sphere of images and penetration, envy politicians their power. It is a mistake. Orwell should be our teacher—to a certain degree. We have to be vigilant, but we should not leave our field, our sphere. We have our moments of clear vision, we have our drafts, we are changing them and improving them. We do not bear practical responsibility. We are bearing intellectual responsibility, because we are trying to decipher the meaning of the world.

Sometimes I think that a writer, who, unlike me, is living in his country, in his native town, in the house which perhaps belonged to his family for a long time, may suffer a situation of exile much more painfully than I do, if he surrenders to the temptation of political language and abandons the fertile field of life.

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Barbara Probst Solomon

WHAT MAKES WRITERS RUN

Balzac, Flaubert would have had a field day at the Forty-eighth International PEN Congress in January, the first to be held in this country since 1966. It was a New York happening with a subplot that included international writers giving papers on the imagination of the state—does the state imagine itself? The phrase, lofty, imprecise, sounded like a set of English instructions on the back of a Japanese electrical appliance, so most writers went off on their own tack. Like all New York commodities, PEN is volatile blue chip stock. Now that the returns are in, and the moveable feast at the Essex House and the St. Moritz is finished, one needs to ask: how does PEN imagine itself in relation to writers? Henry Adams, in *Democracy*, was prescient in fingering how conflicts in America between government, money, power and culture get played out; nothing has changed since he wrote the novel over a hundred years ago. Instead of Ratcliffe as the buccaneer Secretary of the Treasury, we had Secretary of State Shultz metamorphosed as a closet novelist parvenu desperately chasing New York culture. When Adams's—to use a favorite Mailer word—"avatar" of New York culture, Madeline Lee, like a proper Boston-New York liberal, resoundedly rejects the Secretary of the Treasury: "Mr. Ratcliffe, I am not to be bought. No rank, no dignity . . . no conceivable expedient would induce me to change my mind," she sounds like a nineteenth-century Doctorow. After a week of writers and wall-to-wall unprotested protests, like Madeline, I want ". . . to go to Egypt. . . . Democracy has shaken my nerves to pieces." But Henry Adams also pointed out that Madeline was a bit of a conniver and had her own secret agenda going with another dubiously high minded character—her other suitor, Carrington.

Heat, fury, deceit, social climbing, moral hollowness, and writers' egos combined like volatile gases: the atmosphere was oddly off-balance from almost the beginning. The two big backers of this cultural boullabaisse were Donald Trump and corporate raider Saul Steinberg who, in return for his reputed four hundred thousand dollar donation, got to give the send-off fiesta for the visiting celebrity writers in his thirty-four room apartment—in a twilight zone where a magnificent collection of paintings by Reubens and Hals worthy of the Prado blends with a bordello-style decor. Interestingly, the Doctorows,

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Paleys, and Allen Ginsbergs apparently were in there eating caviar like the other rich folk. They weren't picketing the exclusion of the PEN base membership from *that* party or boycotting the support of PEN by these financial buccaneers that the American press has dubbed "greenmailers."

My hunch is that Mailer had some model like Malraux in his head; you can't get board approval for secret dreams, and Stendahl never ran *The Red and The Black* through the local PTA. Mailer is obviously keenly aware that American writers and artists have a hard time with the third act of their private and public lives: witness the fate of Fitzgerald, of Hemingway who killed himself at sixty-two, witness Mailer's obsession with the self-destructive Marilyn Monroe.

Who better to resurrect as an antidote to his nightmares of the dark side of American success than Mailer's old, original ideal of a writer from his Harvard days—André Malraux? Rolled into one person you get warrior novelist, activist, literary figure, *homme engagé*, philosopher, and statesman. But Malraux had the real power of De Gaullist France behind him. So with steely aplomb he could remain at the political epicenter of France, and, from his vantage point of Stendahlian entitlement and tangible position, in superbly cadenced style, he could mesh his personal destinies with those of France, while at the same time managing to write his *Anti-Memoirs* dedicated to Jacqueline Kennedy. Also, the French left wouldn't dream of ever interfering with official protocol.

The first official warning Mailer gave his public that he was about to leap into a new style—Minister Without A Portfolio—occurred when he introduced Woody Allen in French at the last of the Royale Theatre Celebrations, and then kept right on going in French: he talked about "grandeur" and set the stage for an international meeting between East and West with writers presiding as statesmen. For the French to contemplate "L'Etat" may make some sense: in English we have only the government and a concept of the constitution. Ironically, though French was one of the two official languages at the congress, other than a last minute post-Nobel invitation to Claude Simon, the French were oddly invisible. France, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, and Greece had only three panelists combined: Western Europe simply vanished. It was rather a pity the French weren't present: their feisty intellectuals would have given the Germans—who hogged the conference complaining about their victimization—a rough political battle. Grass, with almost deliberate *mauvaise foi* turned on its head Bellow's criticism of America—that we

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are a materialistic success at the price of spiritual failure—and then berated Bellow for his presumed celebration of America. So it was left to Mario Vargas Llosa alone, who did valiantly, to give American writers the belated news that the Latin left actually has been questioning the politics of García Marquez and Cortazar since 1971. Why were four Germans—including Günter Grass and Hans Magnus Enzensberger—and three Mexicans, (Octavio Paz, Elena Poniatowska, and Carlos Fuentes, none of whom at the last minute showed up), invited as against only three writers from Western Europe? Claude Simon of France and Juan Benet of Spain were part of the minority who gave finely honed literary papers. Surely the Sontag reply to the women's protest about *their* poor representation, which was quoted by Nadine Gordimer, that "talent isn't an equal opportunity job," wouldn't be the reason she would give for the omission of nearly all of the Common Market countries? There was almost no West Coast representation. Carolyn Kizer, this year's Pulitzer Prize Poetry winner, was not invited. The banal truth was that the men and women writers on the PEN board put themselves on a lot of panels, (let us not be moralistic idiots: I would have done the same had I been given the chance) and then invited a lot of foreign luminaries, many of whom were either infirm or dead, and the results were peculiar.

The most serious failure of the congress was to ignore the legitimate needs of its base membership. PEN is a colleagual association of distinguished writers. The board is meant to serve the interests of this base membership, which supports PEN by yearly dues—it is not meant to scold or *eliminate* the membership, as if it is inferior excess baggage. For many American writers, this congress (the next U.S. meeting is twenty-five years hence) was a unique opportunity to meet with colleagues from other parts of the country as well as to get to know, and be known, by foreign writers. This shouldn't have been a publishers' hustle—Frankfurt Book Fair stuff—a media event, or a chance for the rich to get their cultural megavitamins. Instead of communal cocktail hours and well-publicized places in which to eat, distinctions were emphasized. The membership was constantly cut off at the microphone; their question time was limited while the "big" writers like Grass and Ginsberg had endless turns and unlimited time.

By Friday, the day of the final conference, I felt I was witness to some sort of bodiless mass murder: the first few days already had been dissipated with the Shultz affair. By Thursday the Ad Hoc Committee of Women had been formed to protest the lack of women

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participants. Let's look at the sequence of events: Betty Freidan, not in touch with the specifics of this situation, in a quick, cameo appearance (she was flying to the coast that night), exhorted women to demand at the Friday summary meeting decision-making roles for women in PEN. But as Freidan never has understood democracy, but does understand power, she doesn't always correctly locate and name the real problem. PEN generally has had more women than men in executive and board positions. Its real problem is that it is cliquey, hierarchical, and undemocratic.

The women's group then mapped out their protest. When I arrived at the Essex Hotel on Friday morning, where a few women were gathered, Freidan's general instructions to the women to seize executive power had gotten turned around into forcing Mailer to make a public apology to Grace Paley, in full view of the television cameras. Both she and Cynthia Macdonald, who were presenting the protest, were board members who themselves had been on panels. What was really going on was internecine PEN board warfare masked as ideological conflict. Would Doctorow so bitterly have battled Mailer if Mailer hadn't chosen Woody Allen instead of Doctorow for the Royale Theatre fundraising readings by celebrity writers? Mailer was obviously wrong in acceding to Kenneth Galbraith's suggestion to invite Shultz to give the opening address without consent of the board. But he apologized for that, and it appears to have been his main sin in a year of energetic campaigning for PEN. What was completely mystifying was the willingness of some board members to scuttle completely this international congress—couldn't they have agreed on a channel for protest before Shultz practically was on the podium? How could Grace Paley and Cynthia Macdonald allow themselves the luxury of making quick, private apologies to the women for their lack of representation, saying they "just hadn't noticed," and then demand a formal public apology of Mailer? Really, only the base members of PEN had the right to complain about general goings-on. In both the Shultz and the women's protest, how could board members have thought that it was okay to *1*) be on the board in a decision making position of power; *2*) be on panels; *3*) and also lead the opposition *against* the board? What rule book is this? Why should a known "macho male novelist" like Mailer be held more accountable for PEN's failure to invite women than declared feminists on the board like Paley and Sontag? As serious social reform isn't created by protests against an individual writer, who, precisely, is not a head of state, the only reason for all of this was to humiliate and for people

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like Grace Paley quickly to pass the buck. I had never heard of a board so self-indulgent as to permit its members to jump sides in mid-stream and mid-act, and sabotage a congress.

Gay Talese reported to me that just before the now legendary Friday meeting in which Mailer and the women's caucus confronted one another, having lunch with Mailer and Karen Kennerly and Susan Sontag, he had urged the women to explain what really had happened. He wanted Kennerly and Sontag to make a brief statement that Sontag and Donald Barthelme had been in charge of the invitation committee; they, together with Kennerly and Mailer, had planned the list. Quite simply, there had been some mistakes made. (Why shouldn't mistakes have been made? Writers aren't professional organizers.) Talese said matters got compounded because Mailer didn't feel that Kennerly, as PEN Executive Secretary, which is a paid position, should take the heat. Talese indicated that Mailer may have wanted the confrontation. Susan Sontag, who according to Talese had the most to do with the original invitation list—which indeed looked like a scenario of *Susanna and the Elders*—wiggled out of making a statement. Had Talese had his way, we women would have had to confront the fact that we have the same problems as the unions did when they realized their unions were being run with representatives who used the voice of the people, but no longer were of it. Women have power—and women remain excluded. Now, how do we handle this one?

My guess is that after lunch there were maybe eight hundred people in the Essex House conference room. The women's caucus had assembled early so that in the front part the overwhelming proportion of seats were occupied by women. When Mailer placed himself on the podium, like an angry pasha, confronting mass woman fury, because of the sheer numbers of women, and because oddly it was almost fan frenzy in reverse, the atmosphere became indecently sexualized; an ugly heat rose in the room. Suddenly nobody looked good: we all became cannibals.

I couldn't figure out why Mailer goaded the women by his remark on their lack of intellectual power. Some days later, in a statement to Walter Goodman at *The New York Times*, he said that he had meant to say that in some countries women are so exploited that they don't have a chance to become intellectuals. But his modified statement came after the fact. At the time, while Mailer was reading the long list of aged women luminaries who had been invited—as well as the dead Elsa Morante, who had been hospitalized with cancer for

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several years—what crossed my mind was that, in addition to the odd notion (ascribed to by the PEN board) that foreign women be super icons, what the list also underscored is the painful fact that American contact with the contemporary scene abroad is alarmingly shallow. We know the figureheads, just as Europeans know about Eleanor Roosevelt and John Steinbeck—but what about *today*? We are terrific at Amnesty International issues; PEN does important things about imprisoned tortured writers, and it is imperative that they continue to do this. But let us Americans not delude ourselves that prison knowledge equals cultural imagination; we don't "know" other countries because we protest the variousness of barbarity. It would be nice if more of us—not as a task but out of delight and inspiration—did know more about the rest of the world.

After Mailer and Paley squared off—and I learned more about camera positioning from this congress than I did about writing—there was a brief moment of relief. For sheer dramatic imagery and swirling movement, Erica Jong was magnificent. At a key moment, blond hair flying, in a diaphanous dress, arms outstretched like Marianne de France, she careened down the aisle, in black net butterfly-embossed stockings—a Henri Bendel gypsy with perfect camera aim—"Norman, Norman—for generations we write, and we keep on writing, but for you, we remain invisible. Why do you never see us?" Norman, faced with the swirling heat of Erica, protested, "I see you—Erica, you are the last woman who can claim invisibility." Erica Jong has the purity of a true solo artist: she was on target. She confronted Mailer *mano a mano*: one writer to another, her point that the prime crime for a writer *is* to be blind is a good one. And she wasn't a ward heeler. Then, in a dizzying moment of complete madness, Doctor Moursy Saad El Din, the Egyptian delegate, chided the protesters. He pointed out that disruption by women of a PEN summary meeting could never happen in his country because the women writers there got such equal treatment they never had reason to complain. This was greeted in silence, as the audience ruminated, in wonderment, about possibility in Egypt. The lack of coherence afloat by then was mind-boggling. Mailer dug himself in deeper and deeper. The situation was made worse precisely because it was never clear who was protesting. Were Grace Paley and Cynthia Macdonald protesting in the name of the board? The women's caucus? I assumed that Mailer's remark, "You should have protested six months ago," was meant for the board, but it was totally confusing. The real reason the room went out of control was that nobody could distinguish

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between board and audience. (The fact that the board also got some non-PEN signatures, such as from the Writer's Union, for their Shultz protest also muddied the waters.) I watched and suddenly understood the terror, the senseless mob fury that took place last year in Belgium when the British football team created, with their inchoate fury at the Italians, a massacre. Most of us were numb. Gay Talese managed to break the paralysis by suggesting to Mailer that he turn the microphone over to Nadine Gordimer, who then started to tell us in her calm distant voice about bad matters in South Africa.

Then it all ended and I went home. I wasn't sure what I had seen, but I had witnessed something; it took me one week to pull myself together. Was I feeling deep postcongress blues because the congress had mirrored a raw snap of New York writers' true condition—the media hype, the glitz, the clamor-glamour of protest blitz, the political incoherence, the lack of writers' true community; and finally, the lack of passionate awe, moral commitment and enduring astonishment that has been the writer's home, that firm place where intelligence and passion have met, since the time of the Bible? We all were wrong; we all allowed ourselves to cannibalize and be cannibalized. Another truth is that Norman Mailer, some members of the board, and the PEN staff had worked like dogs for this congress, and matters had gotten so crazy that no one thanked them for giving their time, imagination, and energy. Yes, things went wildly askew, but the failures of this event should be looked at in the spirit of improving matters, not as a federal inquiry fingering criminals. (And there were also many good nuggets: the "small voice of the writer" that occasionally managed to be heard—Amos Oz, the exiles George Konrád, Czeslaw Milosz.) There was a surprising lack of fuss between the Israelis and members from Arab countries, which is unusual for a mixed cultural congress.

We can't allow ourselves to become McCarthyite witch hunters. It is, as Amos Oz said, a question of *nuance.* Either we writers muster some generosity in dealing with each other, or the body that got murdered will be of the writer, all of us, singly and collectively.

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David Lehman

WHEN PEN PALS COLLIDE

Many had reason to regret the highly politicized nature of the International PEN Congress in New York City this January, but no one should have been taken by surprise. Part of the problem, everyone said from the outset, was the congress's theme: "The Writer's Imagination and the Imagination of the State." Excuses for it were made in advance. For seasoned conference-goer Susan Sontag, it was on a par, more or less, with "Literature and Culture," "The Future of Literature," "The Writer and National Identity," and sundry other stand-bys that serve as mere pretexts for literary gatherings, themselves in no need of specific justification or a specific agenda. "The custom," as Sontag disarmingly put it in a pre-congress article in *The New York Times Book Review*, "is to devise a title, drawing on a small packet of such seasoned abstractions, that says as little as possible." George Steiner, writing in the same pages a week later, was less generous—and less flip—about "The Writer's Imagination and the Imagination of the State." He called it "a vacant phrase" and wondered whether its grammatical awkwardness wasn't symptomatic of "a deeper muddle or mendacity in public and private affairs." It got so that an agitated Norman Mailer—the President of American PEN and the congress's master of ceremonies, who performed heroic fund-raising feats for it all last year—strategically reminded the opening night audience that the theme and its peculiar wording had really been the brainchild of not his but two other "fine minds," Donald Barthelme's and Richard Howard's.

In his *Times* article, Steiner reduced the theme to its essential components, "the writer and the state," thereby calling things by their proper name. And indeed, at the PEN Congress itself, this simplification defined the *a priori* structure to the week's unrehearsed events—except that "the writer and the state" was taken to mean "the writer versus the state." The various authors on parade, nearly seven hundred of them from over forty-five countries, were presumed "alienated" unless proven otherwise. It was something of an article of faith, reminding one of the joke about *Partisan Review* in the forties when its office typewriters were alleged to have a special key that typed out "alienation" on command. The word in the immediate context sounded not only anachronistic but also almost comically ambiguous, given

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the lavish trappings of the affair. If the writers present, by the very fact of their attendance, were celebrating their freedom, wouldn't their alienation seem more a metaphysical than a political condition? Clearly discernible, at least to someone with a journalist's skepticism, was a contradiction at the heart of things. The writer as the apotheosis of alienation—a term no one satisfactorily defined all that week—was to converge with other equally alienated souls to party it up at luxurious locales ranging from Gracie Mansion to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The four dozen foreign all-expenses-paid "guests of honor" presumably enjoyed their accommodations at the St. Moritz hotel, but few had trouble making the imaginative leap necessary to situate themselves, figuratively, on a park bench. This helped produce some of the more dramatic confrontations at the congress but also issued in unconscious self-parody. South African writer Breyten Breytenbach took the tendency to its logical extreme when, at a Tuesday panel on "Alienation and the State," he spun out a well-worn conceit in which the writer as dog ("Canine C. Culture") snaps at his leash, whimpers and barks.

In George Steiner's "fine mind," "the state" conjured up a variety of philosophical models in a variety of historical contexts. During the week of January 12th, however, "the state" tended to mean one state only; it became identified, tacitly or overtly, as the United States at the present historical moment. Perhaps this was inevitable, given the absence of a Soviet delegation. (The Kremlin had refused to cooperate.) And given New York City as the meeting place, where a "media event" atmosphere could be expected to prevail, perhaps it was no less inevitable that debate would center on the real or imagined sins of the United States, which stood accused of cultural imperialism here and smug provincialism there, of a big stick policy in Central America and of callous indifference to poverty at home. There were, to be sure, attempts at doing an end run around the classic left-right polarization that ensued. Mailer himself, exemplar of the imperial imagination that he is, was prepared to construct the congress's theme on mytho-poetic lines, treating national states as metaphors for states of mind—which is, after all, what he characteristically does in his political journalism. "Without depending altogether on Jung," he argued in his keynote address, "a case can still be made that the state is an organism composed of many human beings striving in concert and in opposition to one another who yet reveal by the sum of their actions such faculties as expectation, anticipation, planning, scheming."

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This is the way of Mailer's imagination, but it is not the stuff of which media events are made. Far easier is it to get into an op-ed frame of mind and play at being the unacknowledged legislators of the world. "PEN was founded on the attractive notion that writers speak across national boundaries more naturally and gracefully than governments," Mailer proclaimed, but this particular piety proved far less accurate, in the instance, than his throwaway figure of speech likening the founding of PEN in 1921 to "a literary League of Nations." The results were dependable. As one panel discussion after another turned into an impromptu jury pronouncing on the United States, and even unwilling combatants found themselves caught in the polemic crossfire, more than a few participants and a great many observers wished they would all do a little less campaigning and get a little more, well, literary in their talk. Not that everyone minded. On the contrary. The hard left seemed intent on politicizing the proceedings even before the first gavel. But it did so, oddly enough, impulsively, without calculation, and certainly without anticipating that it might do itself more harm than good. It acted as though a leftist commitment were part of the cultural deal, as though the literary community is always, instinctively and necessarily, on and of the left. If there was one general assumption that was tested that week, this was it.

Judging by the decibel level at the congress, the literary left was having itself a field day. Each day brought a new protest, a new issue, a new cause. For Günter Grass it was the capitalist system. Anyone affirming "the American way of life," he said, "has to be enough of a hypocrite to ignore the slums on the periphery and the world-wide hunger." E. L. Doctorow fulminated more specifically at the Reagan administration. Grace Paley led a feminist uprising against "the tiresomeness of the drone of grownup male voices," conveniently forgetting that she herself is a board member of American PEN and as such had ample opportunity all last year to insist that there be more women on the panels. Toni Morrison declared that "at no moment of my life have I ever felt as though I were an American"; the reason she gave for being there at all was that "some black children got their brains shot out in streets all over this country, and, having the 'good fortune' to be televised, slowly, slowly forced the State to pay attention." Rosario Murillo, the common-law wife of Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega, condemned U.S.-sponsored "genocide" in Nicaragua, and Allen Ginsberg, petition in hand, carried on as though Nicaragua were a repeat of Vietnam.

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But the prevailing irony of the congress was that its loudest voices succeeded, as often as not, in discrediting themselves rather than their targets. At least that's the way it seemed to many "non-aligned" observers—that is, those whose minds were not made up from the start. To the extent that the left succeeded in politicizing the congress, to that same extent it failed; and this was so whether the battle be construed as one for the high moral ground or, in more pragmatic terms, for the center of political gravity. A comparison might be made to the Columbia student demonstrations in April 1968; the police bust, as ordered by the Columbia administration, swung all sympathy to the protestors, as to the victims of police brutality. At the PEN Congress, by contrast, the left painted itself into a corner, and stayed there. By the closing session that Friday, Mailer—who fancies himself an existential radical and would be mortified to have his leftist credentials called into question—was publicly calling the left "the avatars of entropy," an impressive-sounding phrase that may not mean all that much but certainly shows which way the wind was blowing.

The George Shultz affair, which dominated the first few days, set the tone and the pattern for what followed. Mailer, as President of American PEN, had failed to consult his fellow board members before issuing what he would later term a "pro forma" invitation to the Secretary of State. To Mailer's evident surprise, Shultz accepted and was duly scheduled to address the throng at the New York Public Library on the congress's opening night. E. L. Doctorow was only the most audibly indignant of the prominent PEN pals for whom Shultz's appearance came as an affront. It was not merely a procedural issue, though Doctorow—in an article for *The Nation* that was reprinted, in abridged form, on the op-ed page of *The New York Times*—did take Mailer to task for making the decision unilaterally. Far more important in Doctorow's mind, and far less forgivable, was Shultz's political affiliation. "It is more than a shame—it verges on the scandalous—that those in the stewardship of American PEN and the conference should have so violated the meaning of their organization as to identify it with and put itself at the feet of the most ideologically right-wing administration this country has seen." Doctorow's reasoning was highly questionable at best. Since when does the scheduled appearance of a speaker imply advance agreement with the views of that speaker? And if the act of listening is really tantamount to an act of capitulation, can censorship be far behind? To be fair to Doctorow, such questions probably never crossed his mind.

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After all, to paraphrase Robert Frost, many people would rather vote than think.

As delegates, journalists, and assorted celebrities descended upon the 42nd Street entrance of the New York Public Library that night, a petition deploring Shultz's presence—and decrying the McCarran-Walter Act, which permits the State Department to deny visas to persons deemed ideologically undesirable—circulated and gathered some sixty-five signatures. Tempers were frayed, moreover, by the presence of Secret Service men and by the crowded conditions inside the South Reading Room, where the opening ceremonies took place; doors were shut in the faces of numerous writers. When it became Shultz's turn to speak, up stood Grace Paley to demand that the letter of protest be read aloud; Mailer refused, and several disgruntled writers walked out. Shultz's speech itself, though it was a highly conventional defense of intellectual freedom, and was indeed unimpeachably liberal in its declared sentiments, met with scattered heckling and hissing. These outbursts, whatever else they accomplished, gave the stolid speaker the chance to look unexpectedly magnanimous and avuncular. "Don't be so surprised by the fact that Ronald Reagan and I are on your side," he told the crowd, having earlier announced his delight at finding himself the center of a hot intellectual controversy, proof positive of a healthy intellectual life made possible by the freedom we take for granted, and so on. It was a neat rhetorical way to turn the tables on his antagonists, who had obligingly weakened their own cause with their rudeness. In an appropriate irony, Mailer—never known for his insistence on decorum—prefaced his own speech by publicly apologizing to Shultz for "the silly bad manners exhibited here tonight." Nor did Mailer leave the opposition unnamed. "There is a kind of puritanical leftism," he charged, "that is more interested in keeping the house clean than in warming it."

At the press conference that followed, no one could talk about anything besides the aborted disturbance—much to the chagrin of Mailer, whose own prepared statement went entirely unnoticed. Mailer compounded the furor with a series of remarks seemingly designed to keep everyone off-balance. First he owned up to being "startled by the liberality of [Shultz's] views" and angered by those whose "aim was to sabotage the meeting." Next question. Why, he was asked, had he failed to yield the floor at Grace Paley's demand? Because he couldn't hear her, he said, sounding a suddenly defensive note; and indeed the notoriously poor acoustics at the South Read-

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ing Room made it a decent alibi. "Oh come now, Norman," said Murray Kempton, dryly. "When Grace Paley rises to speak, you can tell in advance what she's going to say." Mailer then, switching his tactics, demonstrated his trustworthy knack for extending a controversy by altering its terms. "I didn't invite Mr. Shultz here," he said, "to have him pussywhipped."

People immediately began speculating about the repercussions of the Shultz incident. Mailer was clearly troubled. Would it, he wondered, threaten the dialogue with the State Department that PEN had carefully nurtured during the past year? As far as Mailer could see, Shultz's speech conveyed what government officials like to call "a signal"—it seemed to indicate the State Department's readiness to be "disembarrassed" of the McCarran-Walter Act. What's more, as Mailer pointed out, the State Department had proved fully cooperative in the months preceding the Congress; no writer, regardless of ideological stance, had been denied entrance to the country. This being the case, what useful point could be served by a display of "silly bad manners"? John Kenneth Galbraith, who had in his own opening remarks admonished all against being "too relentlessly solemn" (advice that was roundly applauded and instantly forgotten), took a more benign view of the flap. Perhaps, he reasoned, it will have the salutary effect of securing more media attention for the congress than it would otherwise have received.

That it did. And the results were very quickly and very clearly evident. The disruption, tame as it was, succeeded in transforming an unremarkable speech by a rather dull speaker into front-page news; it made Shultz look good. As for the Doctorow-Paley forces, their intolerance struck one as painfully ironic in view of PEN's commitment to free speech. By next morning, the whole affair was beginning to seem at best a tiresome distraction, blown up out of all proportion. "Is Mr. Shultz the only subject that arouses passion at this congress?" asked Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, plainly nonplussed at the Monday morning session he chaired. Yet the controversy refused to die down. Günter Grass, Vargas Llosa's fellow panelist, averred that he was "shocked" by Shultz's appearance—though it's customary for the host nation's foreign minister to make a welcoming address. Mayor Koch, holding forth at a Gracie Mansion bash that night, allowed that he was "shocked" as well—by the protesters' refusal to give a courteous hearing to the Secretary of State. "This is the most intelligent group in the world," Koch said in his cheerfully hyperbolic manner. "And therefore this group shocked me.

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I wonder whether, if Mr. Ortega of Nicaragua had addressed the group, anyone would have walked out. I hope not." Notwithstanding the difference in literary merit between Grass's *The Tin Drum* and Koch's *Mayor*, one would have to say that his Honor clearly took the debate on points.

Meanwhile, "The still sad music of humanity,/ Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power/ To chasten and subdue," was trying to make itself heard as the battle lines hardened. Increasingly, language itself seemed to be at issue. "When Mr. Shultz spoke and we didn't," Doctorow said on Monday afternoon, "language was overturned." It was easier to follow the logic of Robert Hughes, the Australian-born art critic, who warned against speaking of "some monolithic abstraction called The State." To fail to acknowledge differences among states was foolish, he contended; and to apply, as Rosario Murillo did, the word "genocide" to America's Nicaraguan policy was to debase the language. The spontaneous ovation accorded Amos Oz's memorable speech tipped one off to the audience's resistance to any political stampede. Oz questioned the smugly sanctimonious impulse so evident during the proceedings. He conjured up the spectacle of demonstrators in Vienna advocating the cause of guinea pigs, then added that the same righteous folk might well be capable of shooting hostages for the sake of the animals. "Let us not ascribe a demonic imagination to the state and a redeeming imagination to ourselves," he concluded.

One grew more and more to prize those speakers, like Oz, who tried to frame the discussion in terms transcending partisan political lines. Mailer proposed the idea of historical states "as embodiments of a creative vision"—a potentially fruitful idea that no one seemed very eager to pursue. Saul Bellow, offering a short history of "alienation," presented a nuanced view of what the founders of democracy —"the state of nature philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries"—did or did not promise for future generations, and whether and to what extent their promises were kept. John Updike spun out a charming conceit that at first hearing seemed somewhat frivolous but upon inspection struck one as more than merely clever. The blue mailboxes of an average American street, which Updike lavishly extolled, suggested an obligation happily met, the democratic assurance of the tribal need of "interconnection." But they also suggested the desired limits of governmental involvement in the writer's life. This became clear when Updike quietly made known his heterodox view that governmental subsidy of the arts may not be a benevo-

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lent thing. "Grant-think can't be healthy," he asserted, if it discourages the author from reaching an audience of readers rather than a bureaucratic patron.

But prepared remarks were one thing, and the incendiary debates that followed were quite another. These regularly scheduled yet somehow spontaneous explosions were set off, in the traditional way, by monologues in the form of putative questions to one or another panel participant. It seemed that the temptation to turn any given symposium into an "us and them" or "either/or" confrontation simply proved irresistible to the speakers approaching the microphone in the center aisle of the vast ballroom in the Essex House hotel. The pattern kept repeating itself. No sooner had Updike delivered his ironically jovial paean to the U.S. mail than fellow panelist E. L. Doctorow felt obliged to chide him. It was all very well to applaud mail boxes, he said. "I have a feeling, though, that if he goes around the corner, he'll find a missile silo buried in the next lot, which is what I think of when we talk about the state." The German poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger, picking up the ball, then characterized Updike's vision of America as "pastoral"—as though that were synonymous with parochialism and complacency. Under these embattled circumstances, Updike's refusal to deny the "pastoral" charge was quite affecting—one somehow felt, at that moment, that a pastoral vision of America might better serve a literary or even a moral end than any number of sermons or op-ed columns disguised as stories or poems. And Updike's simple statement that he did not regard the United States as "an international ogre" gained force from the very diffidence with which it was expressed.

The exchange was far more acrimonious after Bellow's talk, same place, same time, the following afternoon. Bellow's purpose had been to explain, albeit in broad strokes, the problematic relation of capitalism and culture. The "state of nature philosophers," he said, made political provision for liberty, food, clothing, and shelter—not for culture. Günter Grass, seizing the microphone, ignored the complications of Bellow's argument but made no secret of his ire. "I'm wondering when you're explaining that democracy gave people not only freedom but also shelter and food," he said. "I would like to hear the echo of your words in the South Bronx, where people don't have shelter, don't have food."

It was, perhaps, the week's pivotal moment, the one that most observers remembered most vividly after the shouting had died down. One remembered the instructive difference in the responses

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of Vassily Aksyonov and Allen Ginsberg, two who spoke in the heat of that moment. The Russian emigré asked his German colleagues "to think twice before making parallels between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R."; the American poet addressed his fellow writers as "members of the so-called free world," whose freedom is dependent on the exploitation of others. One wondered at the relative value attached to freedom: supernal in the case of the Russian emigré, who had lived in a totalitarian state; called into question by the American poet, for whom the utopian or visionary imagination is a going concern. Or was there at work that week a kind of moral longing that Ginsberg exemplified: so strong an urge to denounce oppression that it went around looking for oppression to denounce? Was it a matter of perverse envy? Do the "members of the so-called free world" envy the victims of political repression, whose experience of deprivation and danger is so much more dramatic than their own metaphysical "alienation"?

One thought again and again of Grass and his South Bronx battle cry—in part because, feeling at home on center stage but also feeling quite agitated, with every day he seemed to up the ante on his argument. By Thursday, in the context of "The Utopian Imagination," he was wondering out loud whether capitalism is any better than gulag communism. Grass denied it later, but dozens of reporters, several of them armed with microcasette recorders, heard him answer his own rhetorical question by saying: "I don't think so." This was the dogma of moral equivalence at its purest form; and what it entailed was a blind eye toward the East. Nor was Grass alone among the German writers present in keeping the discussion fixated on the depredations of American capitalism; Ensenzberger and Peter Schneider joined in. This tendency gave rise to a great deal of off-the-record speculation. One ingenious theory held that the burden of guilt for the Nazi past supplied a secret subtext to Grass's South Bronx-equals-gulag gambit. If the South Bronx is no better than the gulag, and the gulag is not much worse than the death camps, doesn't this somehow let the Germans off the hook, at least a little? A more poetic interpretation of things could be inferred from Peter Schneider's panel presentation, which dwelled on the image of a divided Germany, bisected by opposing missiles. Was this not a geopolitical metaphor for the splitting of the atom?

One was haunted by Grass's physical appearance, journalistic descriptions of which illustrated Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. The eye evidently made what it wished of Grass's hunched posture,

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his pipe and bushy moustache, and half-lens eyeglasses. To the *Village Voice*'s Geoffrey Stokes, Grass cut the benign figure of "a little old watchmaker." To Rhoda Koenig of *New York Magazine*, he was "a walrus-shaped figure in full worker's-intellectual kit who slumped aggressively forward clutching his pipe." Taki, the columnist for *The London Spectator*, demonstrated that the left had no pure monopoly on abusive subjectivism. According to Taki, "Grass is a fat and unpleasant-looking German, a man whom [*sic*] I suspect must have been the physical model for the slobs in Fassbinder's films of decadence and human decay."

One remembered the words of Adam Zagajewski, the Polish emigré poet, who spoke in Bellow's defense. Bellow had identified a spiritual crisis peculiar to our time. "Life has been, in the modern jargon, de-mystified. It has lost its sacredness," he said. Zagajewski seconded the notion, adding: "There is the danger that spiritual life may vanish here on earth—not because of atom bombs but because of stupidity." One remembered, finally, Bellow's own understanding of what had happened during his confrontation with Grass. For what Bellow said at the press conference that day seemed a summary judgement on the congress itself. On the one hand, he said, he felt "sympathetic" to those caught in the middle of "a life-and-death struggle" between the two superpowers; and yes, it was inevitable that U.S. writers were being put (or putting themselves) on trial. By the same token, he resented the "stampeding of writers into political boxes." It boiled down to a question of language. "What bothers me a great deal is the abandonment of the writer's language," Bellow said. "You immediately hear anchorman jargon and the jargon of militant radicalism going back to the thirties. The language we use is heavily polluted by politics. And we're forced to speak about life-and-death matters on these unfavorable terms."

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George Stade

DRACULA'S WOMEN

Dracula's attributes, as we fit together the scattered pieces of evidence, amount to those of a negative Eros, not the plump, dimpled, and cuddly babe of love, but an ancient, lean, mean demon of lust made kinky by repression. He is rank of breath, hairy of palm, livid of lip, and anemic, all of which, according to cautionary old wives' tales, are what you get and deserve for self-abuse and sexual excess. His brows meet over his nose; his teeth are sharp, his ears pointed—all signs of his animal nature. He has a "grip of steel," which means that once he gets a hold on you, he doesn't let go. On the other hand, he does not embrace you without an invitation: he will not cross your threshold or sill unless you ask him in. When early in the novel (by Bram Stoker, of course) Jonathan Harker visits Dracula's castle, he is at first left standing outside the door. The count, from inside, greets him like this:

> "Welcome to my house! Enter freely and of your own will!" He made no motion of stepping to meet me, but stood like a statue, as though his gesture of welcome had fixed him into stone. The instant, however, that I had stepped over the threshold, he moved impulsively forward, and holding out his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince. . . .

Once you have entered his house or he has entered yours, he will hypnotize you. Under his penetrating glare you will become passive, submissive, or, as we used to say, feminine; your will and intelligence, all your inhibitory faculties, become subservient to what they normally inhibit. "I know that when the Count wills me I must go," says Mina Harker after Dracula has had his way with her. "I know that if he tells me to come in secret, I must come by wile; by

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any device to hoodwink—even Jonathan," who is her husband. Mina sounds like a philandering wife, but Jonathan ought to be understanding. He, too, had come under Dracula's spell. He, too, had experienced what Redfield puts in words: "His eyes . . . they burned into me and my strength became like water." Dracula has the evil eye—which means that his gaze is a projection of your guilt; you see him seeing in you what you have tried to hide from yourself.

Most often, he visits his victims when they are asleep, when hypnosis would be redundant, for to sleep is to dream, and to dream is to become passive before those fantasies we normally inhibit. Dracula's victims, when they awake, remember him, if at all, as a dream of suffocation and blood. After he has visited her a few times, Lucy Westenra, for example, begins to think of sleep, in her words, as "a presage of horror." "What do you mean?" asks her doctor. "I don't know," she answers; "Oh, I don't know. And that is what is so terrible. All this weakness comes to me in sleep; until I dread the very thought." But after a while her dread turns to something else, and she sleeps as much as her interfering friends will allow. Though finally as she is on her death bed, Dr. Van Helsing tries to keep her awake: "It will be much difference [*sic*], mark me, whether she dies conscious or in sleep"—for if she dies in her sleep, she will awake as a vampire; if she dies conscious, she will simply die. Much later, Mina Harker, after a few nocturnal visits from Dracula ("tainted as she is with that vampire baptism"), keeps in touch with him telepathically while she sleeps. To find out where he is, Van Helsing, Dracula's opposite and opponent and alter ego, puts her into an hypnotic trance. "Where are you?" he asks. "Sleep has no place it can call its own," she answers, thus letting in the chill of interstellar space.

The night, starlit or moonlit, is a chiller in itself, and not just because that is when we sleep and dream. "No man knows till he suffers from the night how sweet and how dear to his heart and his eye the morning can be," writes Jonathan Harker in his diary. One of Dracula's many advantages over us is his ability to see in the dark, his native element. "I love the shade and the shadow," he says. Van Helsing provides a partial explanation: "His power ceases, as does that of all evil things, at the coming of the day." But during the night he can materialize out of mists, dust motes, and moonbeams, things there and not there, but there enough to prod an agitated imagination into connecting the dots. And at night he can transform himself into a wolf or a bat; he can call up or command legions of animals such as these, animals that fit Freud's definition of the uncanny,

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animals that are nocturnal, familiar, and alien. A wolf is an uncanny dog; a bat is an uncanny bird; a rat is domestic and wild, *heimlich* and *unheimlich*. Dracula's bite is equally uncanny. Although his canines are wolfish, the holes he leaves in Lucy's neck look to Mina "like pin-pricks," as though made by the pin of a brooch pushed accidentally through a tiny fold of skin. Dracula's bite, in short, is that of a serpent, author of all our woes.

Like Satan, Dracula is a dark parody of Christ, whom he quotes: "The blood is the life!" he says, reminding us that he too participates in a kind of Eucharist—for Dracula not only drinks his victim's blood, but he also makes Mina, at least, drink some of his, from a vein he opens in his breast. And as Dracula recapitulates Satan, so do his victims recapitulate Eve. Late in the novel, after Jonathan Harker discovers that Dracula has begun to visit his wife, Mina, he comes to a resolution:

> To one thing I have made up my mind: if we find out that Mina must be a vampire in the end, then she shall not go into that unknown and terrible land alone. I suppose it is thus that in old times one vampire meant many: just as their hideous bodies could only rest in sacred earth, so the holiest love was the recruiting sergeant for their ghastly ranks.

If Mina is going to play Eve, he will play Adam, as bite for bite, the repressed slowly returns.

In Harker's mention of sacred earth there is even a sign of some dim awareness on Stoker's part (and their names rhyme for a reason) that puritanical Christianity produces prurient fantasies, of which Dracula is an example. In the movies, Dracula must sleep in his own coffin; in the novel, it is enough that he sleep in consecrated ground. "This evil thing," says Van Helsing, "is rooted deep in all good; in soil barren of holy memories it cannot rest." When Dracula travels from Transylvania to London, he brings with him fifty crates of consecrated earth, to make sure he isn't caught short. Van Helsing and his comrades render these coffin crates, one by one, unfit for Dracula's repose through a kind of homeopathic magic, by sprinkling them with holy water and bits of consecrated wafer. Van Helsing's explanation is not impressive for its logic:

> And now, my friends, we have a duty here to do. We must sterilise this earth, so sacred of holy memories, that he has

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> brought from a far distant land for such fell use. He has chosen this earth because it has been holy. Thus we defeat him with his own weapon, for we make it more holy still. It was sanctified to such use of man, now we sanctify it to God.

I must outline one more of Dracula's attributes, one that explains why women can't resist him. That attribute is Dracula's multiplex relation to madness, especially in men. Nearly all the male characters, as they watch Dracula's effect on women, wonder whether they are going or have gone mad. Jonathan Harker actually comes down with brain fever and has to do time in an asylum. Dr. Seward has to take chloral hydrate to sleep: "I sometimes think we must all be mad and that we shall wake to sanity in straitjackets," he says. Even the stalwart Van Helsing gives way to what Dr. Seward calls "a regular fit of hysterics," during which he "laughed and cried together, just as a woman does," babbling all the while how he and his three male comrades are all Lucy's husbands because they have given her transfusions of blood and how "this so sweet maid is a polyandrist," thus implying what we had already guessed, that the exchange of blood is a metaphor for sexual intercourse.

When Dracula comes to England he selects for his first base of operations the grave of a young man who killed himself to spite his mother. A local gaffer tells Lucy and Mina the story: "He hated her so that he committed suicide in order that she mightn't get an insurance she put on his life. He blew nigh the top of his head off with an old musket that they had for scarin' the crows with. . . . I've often heard him say masel' that he hoped he'd go to hell, for his mother was so pious that she'd be sure to go to heaven, an' he didn't want to addle where she was." The grave of this young mother-hater (to whom Stoker has given a number of his own feelings), looks over the harbor; Lucy and Mina often sit on a slab that covers it for the breeze and the view. That's how Dracula gets his teeth into Lucy. One night, under his influence, she sleepwalks to the grave, where Dracula is waiting for her. Her habit of sleepwalking is given in the novel as evidence of her lack of character and will. ("Lucy is so sweet and sensitive that she feels influence more acutely than other people do.") It is also evidence of an impulse she doesn't know she has.

But the novel's prize madman is of course Redfield, an inmate in Dr. Seward's asylum, located next door to Dracula's main London address. According to Dr. Seward's unconventional diagnosis, Redfield is "a zoöphagus (life-eating) maniac; what he wants is to absorb as many lives as he can." He first spreads sugar on the windowsill of

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his cell to attract flies, which he eats. He then feeds his flies to spiders, a more concentrated form of nourishment, in that they each contain the lives of numerous flies. From spiders he advances to sparrows. But Dr. Seward, unlike our more advanced medical experimenters, knows when to stop: he turns down Redfield's wheedling request for a pet cat. Like Mina later on, Redfield is in telepathic communication with Dracula; he sees his "Master" in visions and knows what he wants. He opens his window sash a crack so that Dracula can pour in, solidify, and find his way to Mina, who with her husband is visiting Dr. Seward. Thus Dracula gains access to his two female victims in each case through the intermediary of a madman.

The nature of Dracula's affinity for madness is explained in an impromptu lecture that Van Helsing bestows on Mina and Dr. Seward (and here his accent, which is supposed to be Dutch, becomes a trial):

> "To begin, have you ever study the philosophy of crime? Yes and No. You, John [Seward], yes; for it is a study of insanity. You, no, Madame Mina; for crime touch you not—not but once [when Dracula attacked her]. . . . The criminal has not full man-brain. He is clever and resourceful; but he be not of man-stature as to brain. He be of child-brain in much. Now this criminal of ours is predestinate to crime also; he, too, have child-brain, and it is of the child to do what he have done. . . . The Count is a criminal and of criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him, and *qua* criminal he is of imperfectly formed mind."

This passage, and others like it, sets up a series of equivalences: to be insane is to be criminal is to be childlike is to be a monster of appetite is to be piggy about sex is to have an undeveloped brain.

In setting up these equivalences the distinguished Dr. Van Helsing is not shooting from the hip: he is internationally renowned for having "revolutionized therapeutics by his discovery of the continuous evolution of brain-matter." He is qualified, therefore, to recognize in Dracula the paradox of the primitive: Dracula is both older and younger than we are, younger because older, a centuries-old case of arrested development, of incomplete moral evolution, victim of a culturally undernourished environment, namely Transylvania, where nothing is up-to-date. He is where we once were, but

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he has come to London expressly to feed his brain, to grow up: "With the child-brain that was to him he have long since conceive the idea of coming to a great city. What does he do? He find out the place of all the world most of promise for him. . . . It help him to grow as to his brain. . . . What more may he not do when the greater world of thought is open to him."

He will then be pretty near invincible, although he is hard to resist as it is. We are susceptible to him because he is already in us, which is why, as Van Helsing puts it, "all men are mad in some way or the other." In the continuous evolution of brain-matter, that is, nothing is discarded. The old is merely overlaid with the new, one function of which is to keep the old in its place. The primitive brain *that makes Dracula what he is lies dormant even in cultured British* gentlemen, but in them it is entombed in an overlay of new brain-matter generated by progressive Victorian culture. The overlay manifests itself as a kind of self-control or self-denial, a resistance to temptation, what in the novel is called "bravery." It is what distinguishes Victorian gentlemen from Victorian ladies, in whom the overlay is thin.

Women are so much more susceptible to Dracula because very little stands between them. Their beauty is skin deep: right beneath it, they are crazy, criminal, selfish, and sexy, half-evolved monsters of appetite. Dracula merely releases something in them that is already raging to get out—and they know it. "Why are men so noble," Lucy writes to Mina, "when we women are so little worthy of them?" And women fear what they know about themselves—which fear sends good women looking for husbands. "I suppose we women are such cowards," Lucy writes, "that we think a man will save us from our fears, and we marry him." A woman needs a husband to keep her in line; she has nothing in her of her own with which to resist Dracula. And to be bitten by Dracula is to become abandoned to lust, a kind of moral rabies. And that is what it is about Dracula that appeals to women.

Take the three lovelies Jonathan Harker meets early in the novel. He has come to Dracula's castle on business. Soon he finds himself a prisoner, of whom or what he can't quite figure out. One night, looking for a means of escape, he wanders into a ladies' boudoir, "where in old times possibly some fair lady sat to pen, with much thought and many blushes, her ill-spelt love-letter." He decides to sleep there, rather than in his own spartan chamber. He dozes off on a couch, then awakes to find that he is not alone. Under

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his lashes he sees three beautiful young ladies, two dark, with aquiline noses and red eyes. "The other was fair, as fair as can be, with great wavy masses of golden hair and eyes like pale sapphires. I seemed somehow to know her face, and to know it in connection with some dreamy fear, but I could not recollect at the moment how or where." The women have prominent teeth and "voluptuous lips." "I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips," Harker confesses. The women seem ready to oblige. "Go on! You are first, and we shall follow," says one of the brunettes. "He is young and strong; there are kisses for us all," answers the blonde. Here's what happens next:

> I lay quiet, looking out under my eyelashes in an agony of delightful anticipation. The fair girl advanced and bent over me till I could feel the movement of her breath upon me. Sweet it was in one sense, honey-sweet, and sent the same tingling through the nerves as her voice, but with a bitter underlying the sweet, a bitter offensiveness, as one smells in blood.
>
> I was afraid to raise my eyelids, but looked out and saw perfectly under the lashes. The girl went on her knees, and bent over me, simply gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed about to fasten on my throat. Then she paused, and I could hear the churning sound of her tongue as it licked her teeth and lips, and could feel the hot breath on my neck. Then the skin of my throat began to tingle as one's flesh does when the hand that is to tickle it approaches nearer—nearer. I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the super-sensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited—waited with beating heart.
>
> But at that instant, another sensation swept through me as quick as lightning. I was conscious of the presence of the Count and of his being as if lapped in a storm of fury.

In a tremendous rage, the count hurls the fair lady behind him. "How dare you?" he says; "This man belongs to me." But "with a laugh of ribald coquetry," she sasses him back: "You yourself never loved; you never love!" They both know better: "Yes, I too can love;

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you yourselves can tell it from the past. Is it not so?" In a conciliatory spirit he promises the women that when he finishes his business with Harker, they can kiss him at will. Meanwhile he throws them a bone, or rather a sack containing a child he kidnapped from a nearby village. Writing in his diary the next morning, Harker notes "that of all the foul things that lurk in this hateful place the count is the least dreadful to me; that to him alone I can look for safety." In general, "nothing can be more dreadful than those awful women," but just the same, they make him think of his angelic fiancée: "I am alone in the castle with those awful women. Faugh! Mina is a woman, and there is nought in common. They are devils of the pit." At this point we might allow ourselves the venerable psychoanalytic stunt of reading denial as affirmation; certainly later events would bear us out.

There is much to mull over in this episode, in particular the equal and opposite emotions of attraction and revulsion, one revolving around the other; the familiar look of the blonde; and the implication that you have to be strong to hold up to a kiss, that for a woman to kiss a man is to drain his strength, although the blonde seems to be getting herself ready more for one of the common oral perversions, than for a kiss. But what in retrospect seems most curious is that Stoker never allows us to enjoy through Harker the dangerous caresses of these femmes fatales. Perhaps the idea was too horrible to contemplate. In any case, such scenes of interruptus must have occupied a good portion of Stoker's fantasy life, for they occur throughout the novel.

Lucy, for example, a few minutes before she is to expire (for the first time), lies in a coma watched over by Van Helsing, Dr. Seward, and her fiancé, Arthur Holmwood. Then suddenly she awakes:

> Her breathing grew stertorous, the mouth opened, and the pale gums, drawn back, made the teeth look longer and sharper than ever. In a sort of sleep-waking, vague unconscious way she opened her eyes, which were now dull and hard at once, and said in a soft, voluptuous voice, such as I had never heard from her lips: —
>
> "Arthur! Oh, my love, I am so glad you have come!" Arthur bent eagerly over to kiss her; but at that instant Van Helsing . . . swooped upon him, and catching him by the neck with a fury of strength which I never thought he could have possessed, actually hurled him almost across the room.
>
> "Not for your life!" he said; "not for your living soul and hers!" And he stood between them like a lion at bay.

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The scenes are structurally akin, but in the second, Van Helsing, rather than Dracula, does the interrupting. The two men, after all, have a lot in common; both are old, both foreigners who speak with an accent, and both sum up the advanced thinking of their respective times. Van Helsing, what is more, owes his life to benevolent vampirism, to the sucking (by Dr. Seward) of infected blood from his hand. Like Dracula, he lets out a sharp hiss when startled; his bushy eyebrows, like Dracula's, meet over his nose. Van Helsing is to Dracula as Victor Frankenstein is to his monster, as Holmes is to Moriarty, as Dr. Jekyll is to Mr. Hyde, as Freud's ego is to his id. "Oh, unconscious cerebration," exclaims Dr. Seward, who is Van Helsing's pupil, "you will have to give the wall to your conscious brother"—which amounts to saying where id was, there let ego be. I conclude from all this that as women need husbands to save them from Dracula or themselves, so men need a partriarch, whether in his aspect of good father or bad, to save them from women. Van Helsing, by the way, shares his first name, Abraham, with Stoker and with Stoker's father, a retiring man who failed to protect his son from his much younger and aggressive wife, a feminist with a vengeance and a good friend of Lady Wilde, Oscar's mother.

We meet Harker's three would-be paramours only once more, at the very end of the novel, when Dracula is already cornered. Van Helsing is looking for their crypts, so that he can cut off their heads and transfix them with stakes, thus forever ridding the world of their menace. But as he lingers over his task, he pins their menace on their charms:

> She lay in her Vampire sleep, so full of life and voluptuous beauty that I shudder as though I have come to do murder. Ah, I doubt not that in old time, when such things were, many a man who set forth to do such a task as mine, found at the last his heart fail him, and then his nerve. So he delay, and delay, and delay, till the mere beauty and fascination of the wanton Un-Dead have hypnotise him; and he remain on and on, till sunset come, and the Vampire sleep be over. Then the beautiful eyes of the fair women open and look love, and the voluptuous mouth present to a kiss—and man is weak. . . .
>
> . . . Yes, I was moved—I, Van Helsing, with all my purpose and with my motive for hate—I was moved to a yearning for delay which seemed to paralyze my faculties and to clog my very soul. . . .

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> . . . She was a fair to look on, so radiantly beautiful, so exquisitely voluptuous, that the very instinct of man in me, which calls some of my sex to love and to protect one of hers, made my head whirl with new emotion.

But a despairing and distant wail from Mina breaks Van Helsing's spell. He steels himself to "the horrid screeching as the stake drove home; the plunging of writhing form, and lips of bloody foam," until his work is finished. Well, vampires are "undead" in the first place because the wages of sin is death. The vampire women are killed doubly dead for the same reason. The sin, in this case, is female sexuality. What is sinful about it is that it arouses men, who are weak. Why men should not be aroused, Stoker doesn't say, but one can guess.

These notions are easier to laugh at—in a nervous sort of way—when abstracted from the novel's events than when left latent in them. Stoker's terrific sincerity is the very opposite of camp. Especially the novel's main event, Lucy's transformation, which is stretched as on a rack over two hundred pages, pulls you in by the lapels. Her full name is Lucy Westenra, which, as a number of critics have remarked, means roughly "Light of the West"; her decline into vampirism has about it the atmosphere of a world-historical catastrophe. Certainly she has the qualities of a daydream we can document in the writings of Western males straight back to Chaucer, at least. She is very fair, so gorgeous that three well set up males propose to her in a single day. She is virginal, innocent, inexperienced, sweet, defenseless, a damsel in distress, a stimulus to fantasies of sexual assault. And she has all the right attitudes: she regularly makes invidious comparisons between the sexes in favor of the male's greater nobility, bravery, generosity, fair-mindedness, competence, good sense, steadfastness of purpose, self-control, and all-around virtuousness. She has nothing but scorn for the "New Woman," the feminists of her day.

But this paragon, as she sleepwalks out to Dracula and thereafter night after night opens her window to him, proves that after all she is only a woman. One good effect of Lucy's assignations with Dracula is that it brings together the novel's main male characters, whose bonds of friendship to each other are made of better stuff than the love of a woman. When her fiancé, Arthur Holmwood, later Lord Godalming (a good name for a would-be savior), becomes alarmed over Lucy's lethargy and anemia, he calls in his friend, Dr.

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Seward, one of Lucy's former suitors. Dr. Seward brings with him Quincey Morris, an outdoorsy but housebroken American, Lucy's third suitor. Stumped by Lucy's symptoms, Dr. Seward then calls in his old teacher, Dr. Van Helsing, for a consultation. Now that the patriarch is in place, this primal horde comes close to saving Lucy from herself, from her openness to Dracula. Their treatment, in the main, is to make Lucy eat a lot, to decorate her person and her bed chamber with the symbols of Christianity and with garlic plants, and, above all, to give her transfusions of blood. "A brave man's blood is the best thing on this earth when a woman is in trouble," says Van Helsing to Quincey Morris. "You're a man and no mistake. Well, the devil may work against us for all he's worth, but God sends us men when we want them."

That's what Lucy thinks, too. Flustered at having to turn down two of her three suitors, Lucy had prettily asked, "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?" She gets her wish, metaphorically speaking, as the men empty their vital fluid into her. Each time, the transfusion restores Lucy's rosy cheeks, but leaves the donor pale and limp. "No man knows, till he experiences it, what it is to feel his own life-blood drawn into the veins of the woman he loves," says Dr. Seward, with a sigh. And each time the sacrifices of the men are negated by women, as Lucy, her mother, or maidservants remove those smelly garlic plants or crucifixes, or sleep on the job of lookout while the depleted men try to revivify themselves with sleep, Death's brother. As Lucy inexorably sinks, all the parental figures die off: Lucy's mother, Arthur's father, Harker's foster father, even Gerald Swales, one hundred years old, who had taken Lucy and Mina under his wing. (Lucy had been fatherless, and Mina had been motherless and fatherless to begin with.) Parental authority out of the way, Lucy dies into undeath.

Soon there are newspaper stories of a "Bloofer Lady," or beautiful lady, who kidnaps children and then leaves them where patrolling Bobbies find them dazed, weak, and with pin-pricks on their necks. Van Helsing knows what is happening, but his comrades refuse to believe him. One night, at the stroke of twelve, he leads them to Lucy's grave, so that they can see for themselves. Here, in Dr. Seward's words, is what they see:

> . . . a dark-haired woman, dressed in the cerements of the grave. We could not see the face, for it was bent down over what we saw to be a fair-haired child. There was a pause and a sharp little cry,

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such as a child gives in sleep. . . . My own heart grew cold as ice, and I could hear the gasp of Arthur, as we recognized the features of Lucy Westenra, but yet how changed. The sweetness was turned to admantine, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness. . . . We could see that the lips were crimson with fresh blood, and that the stream had trickled over her chin and stained the purity of her lawn death-robe.

When Lucy—I call the thing that was before us Lucy because it bore her shape—saw us she drew back with an angry snarl, such as a cat gives when taken unawares; then her eyes ranged over us. Lucy's eyes in form and colour; but Lucy's eyes unclean and full of hell-fire, instead of the pure, gentle orbs we knew. At that moment the remnant of my love passed into hate and loathing; had she then to be killed, I could have done it with savage delight. As she looked, her eyes blazed with unholy light, and the face became wreathed with a voluptuous smile. Oh, God, how it made me shudder to see it! With a careless motion, she flung to the ground callous as a devil, the child that up to now she had clutched strenuously to her breast, growling over it as a dog growls over a bone. The child gave a sharp cry, and lay there moaning. There was a cold-bloodedness in the act which wrung a groan from Arthur; when she advanced to him with outstretched arms and a wanton smile he fell back and hid his face in his hands.

She still advanced, however, and with a languorous, voluptuous grace, said:—

"Come to me, Arthur. Leave these others and come to me. My arms are hungry for you. Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband, come!"

There was something diabolically sweet in her tones—something of the tingling of glass when struck—which rang through the brains even of us who heard the words addressed to another. As for Arthur, he seemed under a spell; moving his hands from his face, he opened wide his arms. She was leaping for them, when Van Helsing sprang forward and held between them his little golden crucifix. She recoiled from it and, with a suddenly distorted face, full of rage, dashed past him as if to enter the tomb. . . .

Never did I see such baffled malice on a face; and never, I trust, shall such ever be seen again by mortal eyes. The beautiful colour became livid, the eyes seemed to throw out sparks of hell-fire, the brows were wrinkled as though the folds of the flesh were the coils of Medusa's snakes, and the lovely, blood-stained mouth grew to an open square, as in the passion masks of the Greeks and Japanese. If ever a face meant death—if looks could kill—we saw it at that moment.

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Lucy's sweetness turns into heartless cruelty, her purity into voluptuous wantonness, her gentle orbs into unclean hell-fire, her beautiful color into a livid flush. And because of these changes, Dr. Seward's love turns into hate and loathing. "Had she then to be killed," he says, "I could have done it with savage delight." The single catalyst for these transformations is the element of sex. All that has been perceptibly added to Lucy is sexuality. "Come, my husband, come!" she says, like many an exasperated wife before her. But before Arthur can come, Van Helsing intervenes, as he had intervened once before, as Dracula has intervened between Jonathan Harker and the vampire ladies. And as though she were not already hateful enough, Lucy "with a careless motion" flings the child from her breast, where instead of nursing it, she had been feeding on it. An aroused female sexuality, that is, does not nurture children and husbands; it drains them dry and tosses them aside. Female sexuality is insatiable and selfish, indifferent to the decent self-restraint, the self-sacrifice and suppression of appetite, upon which survival of the family depends. It is the very antithesis of motherhood. Thus the Light of the West goes out. No wonder the men agree that the next day at noon they will put a stop to the nonsense once and for all.

As they look down into Lucy's coffin, any qualms they may have felt are quenched by her debauched aspect, by "the blood-stained, voluptuous mouth—which it made one shudder to see—the whole carnal and unspiritual appearance, seeming like a devilish mockery of Lucy's sweet purity." As Lucy's fiancé, Arthur has best claim to do the honors—"the work of her destruction was yielded as a privilege to the one best entitled to it." He places the point of a sharpened stake over her heart, so that you can "see its dint in the white flesh," while Van Helsing reads a prayer for the dead. "Then he struck with all his might," and Dr. Seward's choice of words makes us see an even more primal scene behind the one he describes:

> The Thing in the coffin writhed; and a hideous, bloodcurdling screech came from the opened red lips. The body shook and quivered and twisted in wild contortions; the sharp white teeth champed together till the lips were cut, and the mouth was smeared with a crimson foam. But Arthur never faltered. He looked like a figure of Thor as his untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it.

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> His face was set, and high duty seemed to shine through it; the sight of it gave us courage so that our voices seemed to ring through the little vault.
>
> And then the writhing and quivering of the body became less, and the teeth seemed to champ, and the face to quiver. Finally it lay still. The terrible task was over.
>
> The hammer fell from Arthur's hand. He reeled and would have fallen had we not caught him. The great drops of sweat sprang from the forehead, and his breath came in broken gasps. It had indeed been an awful strain on him. . . .

The sympathy, which has a narcissistic ring to it, is all for poor Arthur, maybe because Lucy seems to be having the best orgasm in recorded history. Either way you look at Arthur's mercy-bearing stake, Lucy is the sole beneficiary, either of a saved soul or a satiated body. No doubt that is why high duty shone on Arthur's face—which only shows how easy it is to do one thing while your mind is on another, a sleight of mind not restricted to bedrooms of the Victorian era. That high duty, we gather, is to give Lucy in spades the punishment she was asking for, but the trick lies in not letting yourself know that you enjoy doing it. The knowledge would cancel out the enjoyment. One therefore does one's duty, but the strain is awful.

If Lucy becomes an epitome of what is horrifying about women, Mina is an exemplar of what women must become to avoid the mercy-bearing stake. Oh, she is enough of a woman to fall some distance into vampirism. ("I suppose it is some of the taste of the original apple that remains still in our mouths," as she herself observes.) But she does not go all the way. The traits that enable her to hold back from going all the way are the traits that make her an exemplar of feminine virtue. For one thing, she knows enough to put her fate into the hands of men. When the men decide to keep her in the dark about their plans for destroying Dracula—"It is too great a strain for a woman to bear," says Van Helsing—she agrees that they know what is best for her: "I suppose it is one of the lessons that we poor women have to learn," she says.

For another thing, she understands that her gender-specific purpose in life is to be of service to men. While still only engaged to Jonathan she studied shorthand, timetables, and business law, so as to be "useful" to her future husband. "I must attend to my husband" is her constant refrain. But if she is wifely to Jonathan, she is daughterly to Van Helsing, sisterly to Quincy Morris, and motherly

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to Arthur in his bereavement. "We women have something of the mother in us that makes us rise above smaller matters when the mother spirit is evoked," she says; "I felt this big sorrowing man's head resting on me, as if it were that of the baby that some day may lie on my bosom, and I stroked his hair as though he were my child"—thus showing that, unlike Lucy, she knows what a bosom is for.

Again unlike Lucy, she is fully conscious of her taint, which she properly abhors. By way of introduction to a plea that the men do away with her should she become a full-fledged vampire, she says this:

> I know that all that the brave earnest men can do for a poor, weak woman, whose soul perhaps is lost—no, no, not yet, but is at any rate at stake—you will do. But you must remember that I am not as you are. There is a poison in my blood, in my soul, which may destroy me; which must destroy me, unless some relief comes to us.

Better yet, and still unlike Lucy, she knows how dangerous her taint is to men, how vigilantly she must suppress her passion to infect Jonathan. "Unclean, unclean!" she exclaims. "I must touch him or kiss him no more. Oh, that it should be that it is I who am now his worst enemy, and whom he may have most cause to fear."

It is not surprising, then, that prose poems in praise of Mina, that "pearl among women," flow from Van Helsing's lips: she is proof "that there are good women still left to make life happy." In fact:

> . . . she is one of God's women, fashioned by his own hand to show us men and other women that there is a heaven where we can enter, and that its light can be here on earth. So true, so sweet, so noble, so little an egoist—and that, let me tell you, is much in this age, so sceptical and selfish.

Mina is a haven in a heartless world. That's much, but not everything. What above all enables her to resist Dracula, to conquer her own female nature, is that she is not entirely a woman. Morally speaking, the most important component in her makeup is masculine. She does not have the primitive and criminal brain of

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Dracula. She has the brain of a man. "Ah, that wonderful Madame Mina!" says Van Helsing. "She has a man's brain—a brain that a man should have were he much gifted—and a woman's heart," the perfect combination. It is through application of "her great brain which is trained like a man's brain" that she is able to organize a mass of documents so as to reveal to the men exactly what Dracula is, what his plans are, and how to track him down. Thus her better half helps to defeat her worser.

So there we have it: through Mina, we see what men want of women. Through Lucy we see what men both want and don't want. Men want women to be at once sexy and virginal, for example, and motherly to boot. They like their women to be womanly, but will kill them for it, at least in their imaginations. They also like their women to be manly. But it would take a far less easily fatigued pen than mine to itemize all that men want of women, for men are weak. I will skip the addition and guess at the sum: men say that women are this or that, rather than that or this, because they need women to be this or that—which has the sound of a tautology (like other statements about anything of importance). But between the first term and its return we pass through one explanation of misogyny. I would say that the size of a man's misogyny is equal to the distance between the compliant creatures of his daydreams and the women he actually meets, who are different, to put it mildly.

One final word, for the last thing I want to be confused with is a feminist sympathizer. Although I know nothing about women, I believe that if you were to look at how women writers depict men, in, say, *Frankenstein* and *Jane Eyre*, you would find yourself in a separate but equal madhouse of fascination and dread, of displaced horror, misdirected violence, and abysmal longings.

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Edith Kurzweil

AN INTERVIEW WITH JULIA KRISTEVA

EK: When I first knew you, you had written about women in China, and you were very involved with the publication *Tel Quel.* You were primarily a writer. Soon you were very much interested in questions of semiotics and deconstruction. What made you become a psychoanalyst?

JK: Well, as soon as I began working in France, I got interested in literary criticism and in the feminist and political issues you just mentioned. This led me to try to analyze some of the "avant-garde writing," which, I believe, begins with Mallarmé at the end of the nineteenth century and goes through surrealism. (*Tel Quel* is an extension of this movement.) So, in order to apprehend the formal construction and logic of a work, and of the human experience it expresses, I wanted to understand the psychological functions of language in critical situations. Such situations for the most part occur before language exists—in infants or in the disturbed language of psychosis. I then tried to analyze the acquisition of language and psychotic language as critical discourses. For neutral description or observation are not enough: I had to involve myself to understand how the people I hear are contributing to the transformation of a relationship. Therefore, I went into psychoanalytic treatment and wanted to become a psychoanalyst. This was my intellectual motivation, but there was a whole range of personal motivations, such as living in exile, not belonging to a culture or to my native language. This is a common situation in the modern world, where we often are strangers in exile and live in hostile surroundings. For me this situation was painful, and thus it pushed me to know more about myself, about exile as more than a sociological fact, as part of my psychic structure: some people choose to be foreigners not only in response to political pressures but because they have never felt at home anywhere. Psychoanalysis helps in understanding this situation.

EK: Are you saying that your own personal history pushed you both towards understanding and studying French literature and, then, towards understanding yourself via psychoanalysis?

JK: Yes.

EK: Why, I wonder, don't more people do that? After all, so many people have been in similar situations and don't go into psychoanal-

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ysis or use literature to resolve their problems. Obviously talent has something to do with it.

JK: I don't really know. But my family, early on, pushed me into a cultural milieu. Literature was important to us, so we couldn't imagine—particularly in Eastern countries where religion was banned and political issues became dogmatic—that children could grow up without art and literature. They always were a part of me. But you are asking why more literary people don't go into psychoanalysis. I think that literary criticism, after formalism, and particularly after structuralism, got too abstract. This is interesting, because when you try to describe more precisely how literary form functions, when you get to the eternal logic of texts and get into abstractions, you often tend to lose its human aspects—its importance to the reader and writer. In other words, we cannot see the inner dynamics, the inner motivations, or the results of reading *on* somebody who reads. That is why I think psychoanalysis may be a viable extension of formalistic studies, so that these studies don't reach a sort of impasse.

EK: Does this mean that you do not support the popularity of French deconstruction among American literary academics, for whom it has become somewhat rigid, and that their pursuits are too formalistic for you?

JK: Yes. I have the impression that Americans have picked up French theoretical development only partially and that it has become a sort of monopoly. It goes beyond the essentials of symbolic forms, sometimes quite dogmatically: even its most enthusiastic French proponents are less dogmatic than the Americans.

EK: That's exactly my impression.

JK: For instance, when we say that we try to analyze metaphysical presuppositions, and when we question the notions of "meaning," or "form," as well as the dichotomy between meaning and form—we know that we cannot *entirely* get away from these metaphysical statements. We assume that there always is a sort of dialectic between the metaphysical postulates and something else, and this dialectic enables us to consider such fields as ethics and history. In America, the so-called deconstructionists think that, because ethics and history belong to metaphysics and because metaphysics is criticized by Heidegger or his French followers, ethics and history no longer exist. I have been amazed when lecturing at American universities, for instance, when trying to understand Mallarmé's formal involvement at the end of the nineteenth century in relation to French history, to religion, the state arts, the bourgeois parties—somebody in the audience al-

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ways asks why I speak about ethics and history when those notions already have been deconstructed. Not even the most dogmatic French deconstructionists ask such questions.

EK: Yes, many of us feel the same way. But, do you think that the people who invite you are more familiar with your positions of five or ten years ago?

JK: Maybe. But I don't think that they were quite so formalistic even then. Still, there is some sort of misinterpretation, since formalism is newer than are historical and ethical interpretations: some people focus on it and forget its content. I wrote my first paper in France for Roland Barthes's 1966 seminar about Mikhail Bahktin. He soon became an important figure. But I spoke about a book by Bakhtin on Dostoevsky, and about another one on Rabelais, which already were considered poststructuralist or postformalist. Bakhtin accounted for what happens in the literary forms of Rabelais and Dostoevsky, but did not disconnect these formal aspects from the surrounding history and ethics. He looked at the esthetics of the Carnival in relation to the Church, etcetera. I was interested in how he already considered form as part of historical and moral issues.

EK: Unfortunately, in America, we divide intellectual life into disciplines.

JK: Yes, it is a universal academic tradition.

EK: From what you said, I gather you believe that the French are more playful than the Americans?

JK: Yes. On the one hand Americans are more extremist and on the other more tolerant. Those tendencies in structuralism, for instance, or what you call the deconstructivism of Derrida, have been developed in a very sharp and absolute way. In France, they are not the only important, or unique, orientations. They exist in a cultural tradition and at a cultural intersection that allows for other positions—both classical and ideological. At one time we suffered from a strong tradition, but such a tradition also prevents new inventions from taking over, from considering themselves as unique and absolute.

EK: In Paris, of course, you always have many more interdisciplinary discussions in the real sense, rather than conferences that call on people from various disciplines.

JK: Yes, this is true. And this was particularly important in French universities after '68. Yet, it also gave rise to something useless, because people representing different epistemological models often cannot talk to each other; they stay on parallel discourses that don't cross or meet. That is why we now change the very objects of our

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analyses. When we want to be interdisciplinary, we choose an interdisciplinary topic and address it from the different kinds of discourse. For instance, in my university we now have a research group on the theme of crisis: what is a crisis—in literature, philosophy, ideology, religion, and so on. We go back to the sixteenth century, and look at it in the seventeenth, the nineteenth and the twentieth century. In order to analyze such an ambiguous topic, we do so in terms of linguistics, sociology, philosophy, psychology, etcetera. Thus every scholar is obliged to be on top of all these discourses, rather than wait for the various specialists to supply their expertise.

EK: In other words, as one used to say, you have to make it all your own.

JK: Yes, it supposes that you don't belong to your own discipline alone, but that you broaden and enrich it.

EK: Personally, I've always found this very appealing.

JK: Well, it may seem *un peu dilettante*, but it's not.

EK: I wanted to ask you something else, about your work as a psychoanalyst. It seems to me that it's one thing to be in therapy and another actually to treat patients. You must have had a great deal more training and, I assume, a didactic analysis, so that you really are engaged in two enterprises. Do you find that the two mingle?

JK: Literary criticism and the practice?

EK: Yes. Do you find that seeing patients and sitting behind the couch or across from it, whichever way you do it, and listening to peoples' problems over and over again, helps you with your literary activities?

JK: Yes, it helps. And it does something else. I'll try to explain what it does, and how this illuminates literary works. Theoretical development, I believe, achieved a very high level of speculation, of abstraction, and thus brought something new into European culture. But also this abstraction presupposes a split from practice that is a source of a "malaise" in our culture. Hannah Arendt talked about it in the controversey over distinctions between work and labor, and between practice and speculation. Literary and philosophical work is speculation. At the same time, you get more involved by helping people and by changing real situations. After all, one of the post-Hegelian, that is of the Marxist, issues was to unite separate fields of human activity. So far, the various solutions have been more or less dreadful, because they either betrayed the purity and sharpness of intellectual work, or they proposed practical solutions that were dogmatic and somewhat dangerous. Psychoanalysis, it seems to me, can bring them

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together. We have to reach a very subtle liberation, nevertheless it is liberation, speculation, etcetera, that cannot exist without practical *involvement: it arises in the cure, helps it, and is realized in it.* Hence we achieve a very particular connection, which does not even exist in the sciences. This is why psychoanalysis is a very special field, and why I went into it—at least it is one of my reasons. I did not want to remain in only abstractions and theoretical observations about writers or artists. In psychoanalysis, I *think* and I *do*; it's very interesting. This helps my literary criticism because I now am in a better position to understand the writer's motivations in changing religious, ideological or sexual languages, forms and themes. I also can surmise what happens to the personality of the writer, and his impact on the reader. Psychoanalysis helps me to understand both reception and creation. Because people on the couch are telling stories, they are permanent writers, maybe not always very gifted ones. But from time to time I have the impression that we sometimes hear more interesting stories on the couch than are being published. (When I said that on television, I had many demands for analysis.) From time to time, these stories are told in a very imaginative way, not only in terms of content, but also of style. This does not always hold true, but when it does, my patients' are more dramatic than the superficial stories of bestsellers.

EK: I have been puzzled by something else. When you did decide to become a psychoanalyst, why did you become a member of the classical psychoanalytic group rather than join the Lacanians, whose ideas, one would have assumed, are closer to yours?

JK: I can tell *you* why, but I have not told the newspapers. First there were personal reasons. I knew Lacan very well; he was a friend, and he was intellectually important to me. But I wanted to keep my psychoanalysis apart, in a private domain of exploration, away from intellectual preoccupations. Thus Lacan was not the right person to analyze me. Aside from these personal reasons, I considered the Lacanians somewhat too politicized, and thus less interested in clinical problems than in intellectual power. By politicized, I mean that they were too concerned with questions of succession and power in psychoanalysis, in the group itself, and in competing with other groups. In the 1970s, and especially after Lacan's death, my impression was confirmed. This may not have been their fault alone, since they were being rejected by the International Psychoanalytic Association and reacted against this rejection by denouncing the IPA. I

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thought this was archaic, and that psychoanalysis ought not relive conflicts which exhaust people in political struggles that have little clinical importance.

EK: But don't all analysts also belong to a school, be it Lacanian or any other, and need to justify their positions? And don't they all need mentors to get patients? Or do French psychoanalysts recommend patients to members of other psychoanalytic groups?

JK: Well, I suppose it is important to belong to a society not only in order to get patients, but mainly for exchanges, clinical and theoretical discussions with colleagues. But things have changed. My patients are not sent to me by members of my institute alone, they also are referred by others. This means that tolerance of different approaches has increased, and that you are appreciated for what you are. When I have a patient I cannot take care of, I often send him to a friend from my institute, but if I believe that he would be better off with someone from another, I send him there.

EK: Is that partly the result of such groups like *Confrontations*?

JK: Maybe. That group helped this trend to take hold, but it no longer is very active. Yet, many people shared this way of thinking, and its ideas continue to work.

EK: I had that impression the last time I was in Paris, although I also noted that there was tremendous chaos. One couldn't even find out what was going on.

JK: That is true. But much depends on what generation you belong to. People older than I have been fighting so hard *contre les autres* that they now hate the others, or if they don't hate them, they are unable to have relations with them. My generation, I believe, is more eclectic. For theoretical reasons, we feel that we have to know what all the others have done, even the Kleinians, the Freudians, and the followers of Bion and Winnicott. So, we have a sort of psychoanalytic Babylon, but it's useful: you no longer want to be pure, to belong to one and only one group. You want to know what *all* psychoanalysts have done, in the hope of someday hitting upon *the* pertinent synthesis. So I am not disturbed by the heterogenity of approaches; in fact, I think of it as an essential part of clinical work itself in this very moment.

EK: Yes. You know, of course, that things are different in this country.

JK: Yes. But in a sense the French institutes as institutions also need their divisions. Otherwise the institutions could not maintain them-

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selves. Each group has to defend and define its own identity. The people who are in their forties, however, don't conform. They meet with "outsiders" and borrow their techniques.

EK: Now that you are so involved with psychoanalysis, do you think less of politics? Where do you stand politically? Do you support Mitterrand and the Socialist Party? Tell me a little about that.

JK: You may be right. I am less involved in practical politics, because I think that I now can be more useful as a psychoanalyst. I no longer need to add an *engagement* to my intellectual work, because psychoanalysis itself is an *engagement.* But this doesn't prevent me from having political opinions. I don't involve myself so much in politics, because to some extent this would be against psychoanalytic ethics. I do not want to be too visible on the political scene, to be too much of a public person. I want to preserve a sort of neutral and more enigmatic personality, because this is the only way to work with a patient's unconscious. For if they think of you as rightist or leftist, or as something else, their own freedom, I think, may be blocked.

EK: Yes. But even if you don't appear in public or on television, I assume you do have your own politics. Do you discuss politics with friends?

JK: Yes, of course. I have personal opinions and positions. I also discuss political problems with my students in the university. But this runs parallel to psychoanalytic practice, and thus presupposes more reservation than political work. Thus political discussions remain for me separate from psychoanalysis.

EK: I would assume, maybe I'm wrong, that you must have been pleased when Mitterrand got in. But by now, almost none of the intellectuals any longer support him.

JK: No, they don't.

EK: How do *you* explain that, and what is your sense of this situation? How have you been making this transition?

JK: My experience, I believe, was particular. As you know, I lived with socialism in Bulgaria, and cannot in this sense be considered a French intellectual. Some of the latter were quite enthusiastic when Mitterrand took over the government. I thought, in the Western countries we already have a utopian socialism. I hoped he would not destroy this utopia, because when you try to realize a utopia it usually dies. I was persuaded from the beginning that it would be a failure. . . .

EK: When you say socialism, you mean socialism or democracy?

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JK: I know there is a difference between the Eastern countries and Western socialism, but when the French were attracted by the socialist government, they did not properly perceive this difference. I think they thought that in France they could not have an Eastern regime, but they also thought that some of its practices could be implemented. It appeared impossible, for instance, to retain a liberal economy, in a liberal state whose administration increasingly would take care of everybody. Also, one of the early aims of Mitterrand's government was to do away with unemployment. But this meant more centralization of the state, and it supposed that France would withdraw from the European market. Such policies could not be realized along with the idea of tolerant Western socialism. Hence the socialists were in an unresolvable contradiction.

EK: You mean they mixed up the Marxist ideal of socialism with the actual type practiced in the Soviet Union?

JK: There was a sort of mixture between components of Marxist socialism, and their possible implementation in a Western liberal country. Because this contradiction couldn't be overcome, they first went somewhat too far in the Marxist direction and then had to go back to a liberal capitalist economy. Now, some polls show that even people who, for instance, were for Pétain during the war, also voted for the Socialist party. Its platform is very imprecise intellectually, ideologically, and politically.

EK: In other words, French socialism isn't working the way it was meant to?

JK: No. That's why intellectuals have the impression that politics no longer is essential. For a while they thought that socialism was coherent ideologically. But socialist policy turned out to be a permanent compromise. Intellectuals did not know what to do with it, so they stayed in their own fields of expertise. It doesn't mean that they turned to the right, which already has been severely criticized and which doesn't propose any consistent program.

EK: But in a way this situation could have been predicted.

JK: For me it was predictable. But intellectuals in bourgeois countries don't have much political experience and therefore suffer from a sort of naive enthusiasm. They are idealistic and think that some ideals, because ideally good, can be applied without compromising. This type of politics, in fact, is the end of what some call political religion. But we are familiar with the failure of religious ideas, although there may be a return to an interest in sacred experiences. Essentially, religion in politics replaced religion. Everything was to

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be resolved by some sort of political arrangement. After the socialist failure, however, political religion seems to be finished. This may turn out to be a new liberation: our spirits are freer, and we no longer feel the weight of the global solution.

EK: I would agree with you, but then, one still finds these ideas and a political naivete on American campuses.

JK: Yes, maybe because you have not experienced the power of leftist groups.

EK: But do we always have really to be hurt and be dominated, in order to learn something?

JK: Unfortunately. Freud was very pessimistic, and events confirm him. But maybe what I'm stating is a generalization: human beings have to experience personal failure before renouncing their ideals. Maybe the French and other socialist experiences have proven that the ideologies don't correspond to the exigencies of the modern world. Maybe now people will begin to look more seriously at the reasons for this failure and then sober up these American leftists.

EK: Well, we have tried this a number of times.

JK: I often have been shocked by these attitudes on American campuses. Less so this time.

EK: For some, it seems to me, the experiences of previous generations are forgotten.

JK: Yes. This is true about the Holocaust phenomenon as well as about the experiences of leftist politics. It is very disappointing.

EK: What do you think we can do about it?

JK: Write, and try to explain.

EK: But then people have to read us.

JK: Yes, they don't read very much. I've been told about this, and that the younger generation is very Reaganite.

EK: Yes, some are. But I have a lot of students who come from working-class families, and it is interesting that many of them are more on the right. They want to work and to succeed. They often are against welfare programs: because they work, they feel that all others can work too. So, it's mixed. But then you have their opponents as well.

JK: Yes. You think that leftists and enthusiasts are not as numerous as they were some years ago.

EK: You know very well it's not always a question of numbers. A small critical mass, a small group of vociferous people who get signatures, can get things moving.

JK: The left is often very active; it has its rhetoric.

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EK: Yes, it also has its listeners. So it can get much further than its numbers would warrant.
JK: But don't people change when they get to be twenty-five, get involved in other business?
EK: It depends. Many do. But you now have also the third or fourth generation of the very wealthy, who, for reasons of social conscience, do not think politically but feel that it is politically correct to oppose whatever the government says and not to think about it. Many of the affluent middle-class "kids," the so-called '68 generation, have the same reactions.
JK: Yes, this is very strange. Just yesterday, I talked with a friend of mine about a person, and I said that I was told that this man was too radical. But my friend wondered how anybody could be too radical. For him, I realized, it is natural to be radical, that is, to criticize every time whatever is proposed. I tried to explain that when I say that "somebody is too radical," I mean that this man doesn't approach problems by thinking autonomously, but with prepared reactions—which means that for him everything must be opposed. This really is an avoidance of thinking.
EK: Absolutely.
JK: But he said, "Oh, I've never thought about that." He assumed that to be honest means to be radical. He did not realize that to be radical may not always be the only honest attitude, that it may simply be more facile.
EK: Of course, it's so much easier to go along with your friends than to examine every issue, to decide to go with one thing but not with another, and take responsibility for the consequences.
JK: It is very difficult not to go to extremes, either to opt for the new conservatism or the new leftism. These may be two poles, and you cannot talk about them globally. To have a more moderate position, one must try to weigh every case in a specific way. And this is less acceptable. That is what is expected from the intellectuals.
EK: Yes, that's right.
JK: It's supposed to be adult.
EK: But it's difficult to be an adult. Actually I was going to ask you about the American Strategic Defense Initiative, the so-called Star Wars, and about the French attitude of going it alone, or *not* going it alone.
JK: Well, the French attitude has to be understood in relation to the French tradition. At present, the French are afraid of losing their identity—because of the influx of immigrants and of the weakened

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economy, among other reasons. This generates feelings of inferiority in the majority of the population, and not only in the government—whether it will be rightist, or leftist. People imagine that in order to preserve their national identity, they have to possess strategic as well as economic—but essentially military—strength. The exaggerated pride in military power, I believe, is equated with preserving national autonomy. So we have to question whether this need is an archaic attitude belonging to a bourgeois or feudal state, or whether it helps preserve national and personal individuality. The French want to counteract the uniformization of the world, which they feel is developing as a result of both the conflicts and the compromises between the two big powers. They perceive the conflicts between the Americans and the Russians, but think that the big powers agree somehow on eliminating the other cultures. That is a big cultural danger, even if economically it seems inevitable. Thus they aim to preserve a plurality which, in terms of economics, may seem utopian. Nevertheless, it is a good utopia to preserve.

EK: Sure. Are you saying also that the French feel it's okay to be patriotic?

JK: Yes, they are returning to a sort of patriotism. But not when it means going into the army. French students are anti-militaristic. They will not want to fight for France, I believe, because that would be old-fashioned. But the image of France is important to them. This is new and doesn't belong to the '68 mentality. It has developed in connection with the immigration problem, which parallels the anti-racist development of different groups such as the *Ne Touche Pas Mon Pot* (Don't touch my buddy). There is a tolerance towards others *and* pride in being French. This is difficult to appreciate, and either of these two tendencies may prevail. At present, they both exist. National pride is very obvious, very noticeable, and all the parties—left, socialist, and traditional right—are aware of it. So they try to win votes through national and patriotic propaganda.

EK: Is this truer for internal politics than for foreign policy?

JK: For both.

EK: I get the feeling that in terms of foreign policy, the French feel they must defend themselves and must preserve democracy, at whatever cost.

JK: This is true, you have to preserve democracy. If the Americans were to preserve our democracy, then they would be our invaders. Since we would be dependent on them, it no longer would be *our* democracy, but the American one.

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EK: Yes. On the other hand, I assume, there is a certain convergence of interests, just the same, between France and America, insofar as we are both democratic countries, more or less, and the Soviet Union is not.

JK: Yes, exactly. This was DeGaulle's position way back—to remain in the Western bloc. There still is no problem with that, I think, even if the socialist government questioned it in the beginning. Within this bloc, however, the French want to preserve a sort of independence. Other European countries do not have the same attitude, but the same preoccupations. They express them in different ways, according to their own traditions. In England, it is less necessary to affirm autonomy towards the United States, maybe because people share the same language and culture. The Italians, for example, cannot allow themselves to be very independent. But the French remain proud for having invented human rights, the independent bourgeois state, and the real idea of left solutions—as a result of the French revolution. It depends, of course, upon who formulates the position for French independence. But even if a classical rightist government were to govern France—and this probably soon will be the case—it will maintain its independence, maybe in a less dramatic way. It will be a question of rhetoric, but basically there is an agreement about the national independence.

EK: Yes, but still, when you talk of independence, you speak of an independence that will not allow the Soviet Union to invade, if it had the chance. And this is true for the right as well as the left, which is in a way different from American leftists. . . .

JK: Exactly. It was very important for Mitterrand, for instance, that the pacifist movement did not develop in France. The French think that in the pacifist position there is a naivete about Soviet power. For when pacifists say that they also want to prevent Soviet nuclear arms experiments, it's just wishful thinking. They have no way to pressure the Soviet government. This sort of naivete has not been very developed in France, although there is a small pacifist movement that is dominated by the Communist Party. Almost everybody knows that those people are, as we said in our Marxist days, objectively allied with the Soviets. Yet, such movements exist in Britain, Germany and Holland. Clearly, French independence is related to the United States as well as to the Russians. But the balance is not often easily maintained. In Third World situations the French position at times seems quite ambiguous, and it is difficult to preserve national independence about the Third World against Americans and against

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Russians. I'm not sure that they remain neutral all the time: and their position occasionally can be used by dogmatic Marxists in Latin America.

EK: It *is* being used, of course.

JK: This goes along with my original statement, when I said that the French try to be independent from America as well as Russia, and that their position is not always so ideal, or so moral or neutral. Some practical policies, as for instance the support of the Third World, objectively happen to be helpful to the Russians.

EK: Yes. Are you saying that French politicians are aware of this and cannot do anything about it?

JK: Some of them are aware. The Mitterrand government is quite heterogeneous. I suppose that some of its members are aware and think it's okay; others are aware and try to prevent it. But neither their external policy nor their internal policy is very coherent.

EK: Isn't that always the problem with democracy, where whatever you do is open and discussed publicly, and certain consequences follow from that alone? Since we've covered a lot of ground, I want to ask you one last question. You've been coming to America quite regularly in recent years. Do you have any new impressions, other than those we already have talked about?

JK: It is difficult to have general impressions because I see only some people from the universities and a few intellectuals around publishing houses. I have the impression that the problems about leftist orientations, the sort of naive enthusiasm, is less widespread than some years ago, and that the Reagan policies generate very critical attitudes. Nevertheless, the people I meet in the universities now may be more doubtful about their ideological choices than before, even if they don't always revise these choices, although they seem less convinced of their ultimate truth. Also, I think that more and more Americans are interested in a sort of European way of thinking, of living. I read, for instance, some articles on feminism and then discussed them with friends, and they thought that American feminism had gone into a decline. So they proposed to fight this decline by borrowing elements that have always been a part of the French feminist discourse—such simple things as not systematically rejecting men but living with men, and not considering maternity or seduction to be in opposition to the glorious image of woman. And I noted much more interest in European culture and, in particular, French culture. I also have been struck by the decline of some well-established university reputations and by the fact that a number of state univer-

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sities are trying to take over, to be more active, less traditional, and more inventive. They try to have more links with students, they encourage young researchers in the humanities, organize exchanges of students and researchers with European universities. This augurs well for a better cultural understanding between Europe and America in the future. On the contrary, the present period seems to be one of mutual withdrawal and suspicion.

EK: Thank you.

BERNARD MALAMUD
1914—1986
A FRIEND
AND
EARLY CONTRIBUTOR

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POEMS

Jane Miller

THE MATE TO THE PLUM

Shall I speak and light clouds?
May I see? Seeing,
is it the silk of nothingness?
Let dawn crumble
and be milk by noon.
Most brightly of all burned, my love,
now with acres of chamomile that one doesn't win
but as if in a rain, open
with humid air what resembles me most,
shadows.

They have their little castles on them in full view,
curved
like mother has a time called evening.
I have an idea this is the sea,
is the sea, I think, patience?
I think, this is time,
rock draped in black cloth,
and only last year
to have been in front of it. That I touch—
is touch so heavily judged?—

your heart under a shingle of the world,
I find that once before
you opened.
What if I am growing
back grief,
as when I leave off thought
of the vows you have kept to me?
Or else,
it's exactly as you said, long beach, walking to dinner, said,
to have a thought stops breath,

a month of one day

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more beautiful than the next.
Let the droning of the bulls on the moon decide for me
where no conversation served
to survive and farm the desert.
And these mountains you spoke of,
how the soul is the last day
you play for me the guitar
with its six paths over the abyss.
Having lost you everything returns rumored into being

like the truth, nuggets of rain moused down to the river
as if there were a reckoning.
The blossoms have made me last here. Body of winter flowering,
I come back to you as
milk streak by beneath the moon,
as the tenderness of your not having to
see me this way, with my glass over time.
If I ask
who's holding the sky, when will you replace it? If light fall,
let the great unrestrained asterisks

wake you. I waited until the night before, believe me,
as long as I possibly could,
and in time approached dignity,
a large music to grasp but with my eyes
since you are gone and these are not our stars.
I keep like pressed leaves
my hands over my heart when the water starts
sleeping in and out of time behind that
closed door, the door already closed
when I get up to go.

And these gold pieces flying off me—autumn
I spend returning what's not mine,
the yellow bird, columbine,
raven, black yellow black yellow bees, wasps,
evergreens.
Trumpet flowers like us trying out old flutes
long ago, eager and dumb.
Be comforted you are clear, my foreigner,

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like a row of white sails joined
by two red sighs, love words

I took my mind from to be here.
I waited until the night
before, as long as I possibly could,
and then I found them, your eyes
for windows: *You took a good look at me. You saw me. I know you saw.*
Kind hands must be holding
them up, where drift the violet drifted lovers miss.
It isn't far back to the house,
and your not being there in a borrowed wood bending the road
is what I have

to love to love.

Yehuda Amichai

AUTOBIOGRAPHY, 1952

My father built over me a worry big as a shipyard
and I left it once, before I was finished,
and he remained there with his big, empty worry.
And my mother was like a tree on the shore
between her arms that stretched out toward me.

And in '31 my hands were joyous and small
and in '41 they learned to use a gun
and when I first fell in love
my thoughts were like a bunch of colored balloons
and the girl's white hand held them all
by a thin string—then let them fly away.

And in '51 the motion of my life
was like the motion of many slaves chained to a ship,

Editor's Note: "Autobiography, 1952" is from *The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*, edited and translated by Chana Bloch and Stephen Mitchell, to be published by Harper and Row.

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and my father's face like the headlight on the front of a train
growing smaller and smaller in the distance,
and my mother closed all the many clouds inside her brown closet,
and as I walked up my street
the twentieth century was the blood in my veins,
blood that wanted to get out in many wars
and through many openings,
that's why it knocks upon my head from the inside
and reaches my heart in angry waves.

But now, in the spring of '52, I see
that more birds have returned than left last winter.
And I walk back down the hill to my house,
and in my room: the woman, whose body is heavy
and filled with time.

Translated by Stephen Mitchell

Philip Levine

WAKING IN MARCH

Last night, again, I dreamed
my children were back at home,
small boys huddled in their separate beds,
and I went from one to the other
listening to their breathing—regular,
almost soundless—until a white light
hardened against the bedroom wall,
the light of Los Angeles burning south
of here, going at last as we
knew it would. I didn't waken.
Instead the four of us went out
into the front yard and the false dawn
that rose over the Tehachipis and stood
in our bare feet on the wet lawn
as the world shook like a burning house.

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Each human voice reached us
without sound, a warm breath on the cheek,
a dry kiss.
Why am I so quiet?
This is the end of the world, I am dreaming
the end of the world, and I go from bed
to bed bowing to the small damp heads
of my sons in a bedroom that turns
slowly from darkness to fire. Everyone
else is gone, their last words
reach us in the language of light.
The great eucalyptus trees along the road
swim in the new wind pouring
like water over the mountains. Each day
this is what we waken to, a water
like wind bearing the voices of the world,
the generations of the unborn chanting
in the language of fire. This will be
tomorrow. Why am I so quiet?

Hilda Morley

THE LIZARD

The lizard's heart throbs
faster than mine through his
green spots.
With prehistoric
claws he seeks his shelter
in the shadow of the vine,
his head
to one side in watchfulness.
Measure it:
observe the suspense. He is
anchored to it—the fear of danger—& we are
anchored to nothing.

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Though the Spaniard finds
in San Juan Batista's effigies his satisfaction
without knowing why,
we seek out the mystery: to learn
to care
and how much,
for even the bicycle
on the white wall may be a glyph
and magical.
But my heart
beats slower than the lizard's,
making
the dead to rise up
weeping
our own tears to bewilder us.

Molly Peacock

LIVING WITHOUT MEANING

The grandmother I loved is dead.
The grandfathers I was wary of are dead.
The grandmother whose ways I eyed is dead.
My father is dead.

I could never tell them how much I minded
that they lived in an unguided world that became mine,
and when I left it to live within my mind,
I had to leave reality behind

as they left behind their lives.
They seemed to die in the ways they secretly lived:
restlessly, angrily, warily in secret. On I lived,
larger, though hollowed, alive

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but a kind of burial ground
rich in ancient remnants ground
into dust, to surface long after in ground
so far away that what is found

curiously has no meaning,
just a sort of powerful existence,
as a tomb hasn't nearly the dead one's meaning,
while providing the one dead with existence.

Rachel Hadas

PASS IT ON, III

Lilacs look neon in fading light.
Death makes life shine:
a tiredness, a flickering between

ages, which is each age;
a piling up to tottering
and falling back to sand.

So much for cycle. The front-door lock
sticks each fall when we're first back.
We are advised to oil it.

Olive oil in the keyhole:
again the old key turns.
Once again to meander

along the edge of water,
whether tideless sea or tidal river,
pushing the stroller, dreaming

oil in the lock; the key
dipped in lubricity

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the boychild's shining skin
me tired to the bone

Already summer's over.
Goodbye, lilacs. Your
neon is past; you'll bloom again

next spring. Past an age
each season feels like an end of summer
but still the tale's to tell

over and over for those
lolling and snoozing in the stroller,
preparing to come after.

Tall house standing on its high green hill—
children, do you remember?
Lawns slant down to a stream.

Under a striped tent
a buffet's spread in the sun.
Ideas of the eternal,

once molten, harden; cool.
Oil, oil in the lock.
The old key turns.

Elizabeth Libbey

STARS ON A CLOUDY NIGHT

They're up there, I've seen them, I've read
about the bear, the bucket, the guy with the bow.
Sometimes a two-headed dragon wings
from this dot to that in the dark, clear
in his duty like a hummingbird, a bumblebee.

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Things look peaceful enough? Don't be foolish:
up there's like down here. My room's three chairs?
All comfortable-looking. Not one
you can sit in. Derelicts taking up space
against my walls. No one calls. No one comes
to the door. I've painted No Visitors, meaning
only humans not welcome. I've read we
want to become the big bang, get out
and join the gods. I'm fond of these theories
leaking in under the door. I let
them be, I've confidence
out from under the bright lights. I sit late,
unwatched, watching t.v. That must be
why we put roofs on everything: not being stared at
by the universe, is being forgotten, not dead.

William Matthews

LEIPZIG, 1894

We have only one portrait of Bach—scow, genius, mule
and rock upon which music built her church—
and that portrait has been painted over, and restored,

but to what? Because we'll never know we opened
his grave to find he was of medium build
and that if the body is resurrected it leaves its chorus

of bones behind, polyphonal like the self. Each clammy
sweatbead on my arms grew colder. Did I think
a mud dove would fly up from his broken grave?

And all that dirt would need to be shovelled back.
The lantern flames tossed their heads this way and that.
Behind us—for we all faced in like a random

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family at a deathbed—the dark kept an opportune
distance. What, after all, had we disturbed?
The harder I listened, the deeper I heard us breathe.

STUBBLE

Any art has its turpitudes: some days the muse
is at my shoulder like a scolding crow
and some days not. All the secrecy of matter

seems to shine from the shrubs outside my window.
I'll no more forget their steady flare than I can
name it. But how would I look to them

if they, like a blank village, could peer back at me?
Beyond the shrubs, my raggedy lawn, and then
the stubble fields. No stalk of corn hasn't been slashed

at its ankle. Those pepper specks in the fields
must be foraging birds. If they were closer,
or I were, I could see their irridescent wings

deflect light, I could watch them peck and hunt,
I could see them shrug and shuffle their feathers
as if a breeze or longing had tried to pass through them.

Sydney Lea

THE LIGHT GOING DOWN

The worms crawl in, the worms crawl out,
The worms play pinochle on your snout. . . .
My daughter and the schoolfriend who looks like her,
tuneless and cheerful, repeat the old ditty on Death—
pale Music-master who has not yet entered
the mind to insist on the tune.

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They can't imagine what it will be
to recall from somewhere back not knowing the Master.
    I can. And go on imagining:
how would it be to go on living
backwards always, beginning
with Death? To rise from his recital room
in censure and pain, born of undying?

How brief the time
before one cast aside the cane, the crutch, and walked
    ever more into the upright,
and to hell with the Bingo, the card games!
One would feel the cloth swell taut
again over arm and thigh
and groin. A backing to bloom.

One's lifemate, assuming such good fortune,
would grow in this version more easy with every moment
    to comprehend and to love with abandon
till it seemed the two of you lay
pooled in the sweat of intimacy
forever. How would that be,

such comfort before the tears
(so useless for years) that poured
    at oddest hours, at slightest slights?
Then a horde of children hurtling (though ever more slowly)
beside you back to school, to the moments of flood
as your first love told you love had faded
before the early words of ardor sank in the playground ruckus.

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Then a drawn-out unlearning
of word and figure, the telling of time.
    By now Eternity must loom,
especially summers, the elders below
chewing their words and foods on a creaking porch,
night locusts calling back another daytime.

Life must drag, everlasting,
each year a larger fraction,
    a term you no longer had the meaning of. . . .
Imagining, one saddens
at the prospect of Love unravelled
and the slow unknowing

of Death, whose tenor had husked one's every testament
of affection and anger,
    until one lived oneself back past ditty
(I think of how my daughter chants)
and farther. Through Mother Goose,
nonsense rhyme, to the wordless

wail of straightforward desire
as one wormed one's way to the Woman's belly,
the light going down,
and yet one knew,
from back somewhere,
how quiet it would be, how comfortless, there.

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Jeffrey Herf

THE NEW LEFT AND ITS FADING AURA

My involvement in the new left began in the fall of 1965 and ended in the spring of 1970. The ideas of those five years endured much longer, but I gradually moved away from them to the center or center right of the American political spectrum. I have very fond memories of a period of intense intellectual, political, and moral engagement, of friends made, and of a powerful sense of community and purpose. But when I think about my political judgement then, I come to the conclusion that it left much to be desired. Hence, these reflections.

My first real contact with the new left was as a member of the Students for a Democratic Society chapter at Grinnell College, attending the October 1965 anti-Vietnam demonstration in Washington. Then I argued that the war was not in America's national interest—I cared about *our* national interest—that we were not looking at the possibility of a third force between the Saigon regime and the Communists, and that the insurgency in the South was homegrown. I was going through my arguments about how phony the State Department White Paper was on aggression from the North, when a member of something called the May 2d Movement from Columbia said to me that of course the State Department White Paper was correct. The real problem, he said, was that North Vietnam, and especially the Soviet Union, were not doing enough to overthrow the Saigon regime. Of course, it was a good idea to attack the credibility of the State Department for propaganda reasons, but the new left should make clear that it would be a good idea for the other side to win the war.

I was a bit taken aback by this. Anti-anticommunism was not yet part of my vocabulary. But at least there was an honesty to his position I respected. If you called for an American withdrawal from Vietnam, it was obvious that the Communists, not some vague third force, would win. Many people in the antiwar movement either denied that fact, or tried to convince themselves it wouldn't happen, but few, especially in 1965, thought it would be a good idea. When people say that part of the appeal of the new left, as any radical polit-

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ical movement, was precisely its radicalism, they mean that people in such movements have a way of taking premises to logical or illogical conclusions in a manner that tamer political thought does not do. This radicalism was there from the outset, driving us from impatient reformism to apocalyptic visions of revolution in a space of five years.

I have very fond recollections of the period from 1965 to 1968. Grinnell and Madison were, in different ways, very intellectually intense. I read the canon of new left books by C. Wright Mills, Herbert Marcuse, Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy, Paul Goodman, Malcolm X, Frantz Fanon, Simon de Beauvoir, Sartre and Camus, as well as Kant, Hegel, and Marx. Even more important, I also recall very fine teachers at the University of Wisconsin, such as the European historian George Mosse and the sociologist Hans Gerth. Madison also was noted for a stimulating left-wing intellectual community of younger professors, graduate students, and undergraduates. The idea of a conservative intellectual would have struck me as a complete contradiction in terms. But I thought of myself as much as an intellectual as I did as a leftist. The openness and playfulness of the former would become a greater hindrance to me as my radicalism deepened. My experience of those years was not of anti-intellectualism but of defending ideas that really were new to me, especially Marcuse's version of critical theory, neo-Marxist theories of imperialism, and critiques of American mass culture, as well as taking very seriously John Kennedy's idealistic appeals. In retrospect, it seems odd that at the age of nineteen I was pretentiously describing myself as an "intellectual." Intellectuals, I thought, were distinctive because they placed everyday events in some very large context such as History, Totality, or the Dialectic, and because they had the special role of making moral judgements. Like Old Testament prophets, intellectuals spoke truth to power. My father, who escaped from Nazi Germany in 1937, had urged me to do that, though I forgot that the power he had in mind was a very different one from that of the Johnson administration. I forgot just how much he loved this country.

I approached the war in Vietnam with the mixture of moralistic self-righteousness and intellectual pretension that was then considered the moral thing to do in American universities. I had no patience with refusal to face facts. The appeal of the new left was precisely its radicalism. The war in Vietnam was no "mistake" but a normal product of "the system."

I remember feeling rather embarrassed by efforts of people in the antiwar movement to discredit American documentation of North

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Vietnamese support or to deny that the Viet Cong assassinated local officials of the South Vietnamese government. I was not averse to making these arguments myself. But we all knew that they were bogus. Among ourselves we spoke of the inevitability of armed resistance in authoritarian Vietnam. We were critical of China for not sending more aid to the North Vietnamese Communists and were actually a bit perplexed as to how to explain the fact that the supposedly counterrevolutionary Soviet Union was the major supplier of arms to the North Vietnamese war effort. The point was that if you were a new leftist in this period, you probably thought that South Vietnam would be much better off if the National Liberation Front, a Communist Front, won the war.

My morality was thus based on a firm double standard: our atrocities were to be denounced while their atrocities were the regrettable unintended consequences of revolution. The American war was one "against the people," while the Viet Cong owed their support to having addressed popular grievances. The American effort to win the war was immoral, while the Vietnamese Communists' effort to do the same thing was a matter of national self-determination. At the time, my views were a mixture of new left radicalism and the more widespread opposition to the war based on liberal, internationalist principles. The moralist in me would denounce the conduct of the war, as if there was a better American "policy" to respond to the political and economic problems of countries such as Vietnam. As a new leftist, I thought this moralism was dishonest, a ruse and a tool with which to attack the imperialist system. When we succeeded in gaining support from larger numbers of students, it was not because we had converted them to new left radicalism. Only a very small minority of 1960s students were radical leftists. Our greatest successes took place when we were able to link our radicalism to a more generally shared idealism.

In the 1970s, some analysts of the new left described a golden age before 1968 when a still relatively small group of radical intellectuals entertained visions of "post-scarcity communism." This golden age was destroyed, according to these accounts, by the emergence of such Marxist-Leninist sects as the Maoist Progressive Labor Party, Communist youth groups, "Revolutionary Youth Movement II" and "Revolutionary Youth Movement I," known as "Weatherman." What these accounts fail to explain is why such obviously lunatic groups were able to gain so many adherents at some of the best universities in the United States. Clearly the golden age contained the seeds of

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later troubles. The basic problem was that by 1968, a critical mass of leftist students wanted to make a revolution in the United States but had neither the foggiest idea of what it would accomplish nor who would make it. Clearly students and blacks were already "in motion," but the working class was either inert or hostile. The faction fight that consumed Students for a Democratic Society from 1968 to 1970 was focused on where radicalized students should look for allies. The Progressive Labor Party chose the American working class. Most of the rest of us looked instead to "white youth in the mother country," that is, our fellow students, and to "national liberation struggles in the Third World," that is, Communist movements trying to overthrow governments of which Vietnam was the paradigmatic example.

The Marxist-Leninist sects carried to an extreme tendencies evident in the new left from the beginning. They did not create qualitatively new phenomena. They made basic assumptions more explicit, but the assumptions were not qualitatively new. They enforced conformity with an unprecedented rigor, but the size and diversity of the new left served to obscure from us our own conformism. The decisive advantage of the Marxist-Leninist groups over the more diffuse new left they sought to dominate was that they had "positions" on "questions," no matter that they were invariably expressed in Orwellian language and absurd on the face of it. I remember, for example, being asked to decide if it would be better for American blacks to have their own nation-state in the American South or, if instead, blacks would be the vanguard of a revolution in the whole country. I rejected both alternatives, but what was important was that these groups were remarkably successful in determining the terms of debate and its language. As a result, they encouraged the rest of SDS to elaborate an ideological response no less coherent and no less complete. In this way, small Marxist-Leninist groups hastened the process by which diffuse radicalism gave way to highly disciplined sects.

At the famous SDS national convention in Chicago in 1969, the diffuse radicalism of the 1960s lost its national organizational framework. We were now in a period of organized vanguards. Either you belonged to some group, parroted a "clear line," and knew who was "objectively" revolutionary and reactionary, or "the revolution would pass you by." This was the message of all of the contending factions: join one of us or be relegated to the dustbin of history. The time is now. The train is leaving the station. If you don't get on you will be left behind, become irrelevant, shut out of history.

My reaction to this spectacle was both fear and disbelief. By

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1969, the new left had developed an intense and oppressive sense of community. It is impossible to exaggerate the degree of sheer fear, fear of isolation, of being thought cowardly, of losing one's friends, and of not being in on the action when the revolution took place, that I and many other veterans of the new left felt at that convention. Although I had been in many demonstrations, I still looked on in disbelief as the Harvard and Columbia SDS chapters screamed at one another in unison chants such as "Ho-Ho-Ho Chi Minh, people's war is going to win" or "Mao-Mao-Mao Tse Tung, dare to struggle, dare to win." Here were people my own age, who had gone to leading universities, who appeared to be out of their minds.

The "Weathermen," later the "Weather Underground," were the greatest challenge to most of the new leftists there, for however "crazy" we said they were, Weatherman captured the feeling of alienation and indeed hatred of American society and politics that had become pervasive in SDS. This anti-Americanism was expressed in quintessentially American terms and thus was less off-putting than that of the more stolid Marxist-Leninists. Above all, however anti-American it was, Weatherman promised success. At home we may be weak, but the new left was a link in the chain of international revolution including millions of people, especially "the Vietnamese people." The "movement" was a thing of the past. The "revolution" was already taking place all over the world. The only question now was whether there would be white Americans who would be part of the problem or part of the solution.

We were not alone. The Third World was the new collective subject of history, the new radical class taking the place of the well-fed and ideologically blinded working class. I was both appalled and attracted. By spring 1969, I was not averse to apocalyptic interpretations of American politics and an "either/or" style of political thinking. Either one stood on the side of the oppressed peoples of the earth or was an "objective" ally of American imperialism. Either America would be engulfed in the flames of a race war, or we could see to it that the race war could be transformed into a—more constructive and presumably slightly less violent—class war. At last, here were people who were going to put their actions where their mouths were and unite theory and practice.

The Weather statement was fundamentally new leftist in a cultural sense as well. It promised to demonstrate that "the personal is political." Politics was not one sphere of life separated from others. Politics and life were to become one. No aspect of personal life was

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to be kept from political scrutiny, just as no aspect of political life was to be saved from assessment by existential criteria. The best political position became one which manifested the greatest commitment and authenticity, measured by willingness to sacrifice career and comfort. Those who were most willing to sacrifice for the cause —often those who were wealthiest had the most to sacrifice—had the potential for the greatest power over others. What was a sensible and cogent political argument worth compared to the reality of someone dropping out of school, living on next to nothing, and then being willing to risk one's life for the revolution?

In addition to the power of this totalitarian conception of community, Weatherman and the mystique surrounding it made us feel guilty, small and self-serving by comparison. One of its most powerful aspects was its intense moralism which presupposed that the truth had been revealed and that any who failed to follow were immoral. The outward expressions of unbounded confidence, the ease with which complexity collapsed into a coherent program, a camaraderie between people who shared basic ideas and common dangers all combined to place the rest of us on the defensive. Weatherman said to us, come join and be in the vanguard of the revolution, if, that is, you have the courage to do so. End your pointless, alienated life of on-again-off-again political activity for a "total" commitment. To continue your career while the revolution is beginning is simply cowardice and greed. Start a new career as a full-time revolutionary and be successful and win with us rather than lose with the cowardly rear guard. As I said, I resisted the call, but I was not unmoved and felt considerable guilt over not joining up. Were my intellectual arguments against the Weather statement a rationalization for simple lack of courage? It was a question thousands of people who did not join the Weather Underground asked themselves in 1969.

More so than we were willing to admit in Chicago in June 1969, Weatherman was a cult of violence. The first thing to be said about this was that it was not at all the product of increased "repression." In spite of having caused havoc at major universities, no SDS members or leaders were spending any considerable time in jail. On the contrary, it cannot be overemphasized that the incipient leaders of the Weather Underground were flushed with success and self-confidence. The process was one Tocqueville would recognize. Radicalization grew at the point at which civil rights for blacks had improved; the United States was very slowly beginning to leave Vietnam; and the intellectual and political climate on the campus ranged from the vio-

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lent radical left to left-liberalism. The much-praised idealism and moralism of the new left was the source of the push toward violence. If American society was so hopelessly repressive, how could palliatives suffice?

The results of the 1968 convention are well known. The Progressive Labor Party was expelled, and SDS became "better, smaller but better." After a meeting in Cleveland in August of that summer, Weatherman became explicit about its intention to form an armed underground, for which several "days of rage" in Chicago in October 1969 were to be a preparatory step. A friend—who in the early seventies became a vice president in a Hollywood movie company and is now, I'm told, one of Hollywood's most powerful and wealthiest executives—kept urging me to accept the Weatherman position and then to join after the Cleveland meeting. The revolution was beginning, he said. The movement was over. Private life, family, children, and career would have to wait. At times he said the conditions for revolution were ripe, at others that fascism was around the corner and we had to prepare ourselves for the coming clash.

At the end of the summer in 1969, I returned from a trip home to find that my friend the Hollywood executive-to-be had invited the New York "Weather collective," composed mostly of Columbia SDS, to stay in our apartment. Thirty people were lying on the floor, "smashing monogamy" in between chants of "pick, pick, pick up the gun, the revolution has begun." One fellow was torn: how could he join Weatherman and continue in psychoanalysis? A woman was yelling at her older brother on the phone: "What do you mean, you can't give me $10,000? I know Daddy put five times that much in your trust fund." A Marcusian intellectual who'd written a pamphlet called "Consumption: Domestic Imperialism" insisted that Weatherman followed from the analysis in *One-Dimensional Man.* Several people had returned from a summer trip to Havana where they had "talked with the Vietnamese" who had urged them to "open up a front in the United States." I left to go to graduate school. My friends denounced me as a "wimp," and I felt miserable, convinced that they really were going to accomplish something and that I had chickened out at the decisive moment.

Soon after, in May 1970, the invasion of Cambodia and the shootings at Kent State and Jackson State once again brought our apocalyptic visions to a fever pitch. My last political meeting in a new left organization was in May when I gathered with the members of a Black Panther "support group" called the December 4th Move-

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ment or D4M, to consider possible courses of action. The meeting began with a sober assessment of the political situation by a former SDS leader from Columbia. According to him, the United States was on the edge of going fascist. Perhaps six months were left for legal publication of left-wing magazines and newspapers. Now, he said, it was time to "prepare work in the country and in the city, to move stuff from one to another." He was not trying to be histrionic or to rouse his audience. He believed what he was saying. He ended by looking vaguely in my direction and saying that "those of us who are less well known [such as myself] will be able to go underground first, while those of us who are more well known [meaning him] will be forced to remain above ground for the time being."

I had finally had enough. I said this is where I get off. America is not Weimar. 1970 is not 1933. You can do what you want but without me. My friend, the future Hollywood executive, denounced me again as a wimp who couldn't overcome a "nonstruggle attitude." As far as I know, neither of the two male marchers of D4M ever made good on the rhetoric, but Sylvia Barildini, one of my good friends from my student days in Madison, certainly did. I last saw her in 1970. In the seventies, rumors floated around about a furtive Sylvia who belonged to strange groups. In 1983, I picked up *The New York Times* to see that she had made good on the rhetoric of 1969. She'd driven a getaway car during the Brinks robbery in Nyack, New York when a policeman and a security guard were killed, and is now in prison.

It became commonplace in the 1970s to bemoan the lack of theory and anti-intellectualism of the late sixties. I drew a different lesson. No one who was at all remotely familiar with the maelstrom of 1968 to 1970 could say there was a lack of theory in the movement. The atmosphere was laden with myths and abstractions, from abstractions about the contradictions of imperialism and the nature of a mythic working class, to mythic invocations of mythic heroes—the Panthers, the Vietnamese people, etcetera. Certainly the "theory" was wrong, crude and destructive, but political ideologies usually are. The ideas of 1968 to 1970 were coherent, closed systems which promised their adherents that they would be on the right side of History, that the Dialectic would move in the direction they desired, and that the Contradictions of Imperialism would aid the moral aspirations of their members. In a period of great confusion—and the late sixties were if nothing else confusing—such simplicity, clarity, and discipline were very appealing for many people, including many

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highly intellectually inclined members of SDS. It is not true that the SDS crack-up was primarily a revolt against the intellectuals. Without intellectuals, however dogmatic and crude they may have been, the competing fanaticisms would never have come into being in the first place.

There is no question but that the new left before 1968 was a far more congenial place for people who loved to read and talk about ideas than it was afterward. But illiberalism was such a prominent part of the ideas we loved to discuss that we did not put up a very good fight when totalitarian ideologues took over the movement. We wanted community and equality rather than liberty and political freedom. We took the latter for granted, or else we saw it as a sham. It was not in spite but because of our utopianism that we were drawn to political ideas hostile to a free society.

The new left from beginning to end saw itself as an intellectual and political elite. Its end was an example of the arrogance of power, rather than, as has often been stressed, the desperate rage of the powerless. The new left was now going to "fight back." The NLF would "win." The Panthers were "the vanguard of the revolution." "White youth in the belly of the monster" would join with "national liberation struggles" to "smash U.S. imperialism." SDS would "open up a front in the mother country." For liberals and many in the radical left, the new left's message of gloom about fascism and repression, about police violence or the conduct of the war in Vietnam was decisive. But it was the smell of success, moral absolutism, and the lure of power mixed with the language of despair and frustration that I recall most from those years. No wonder the factionalism was so bitter: the prize was leadership of The Revolution.

When this moral and political elite saw that its judgements about Vietnam turned out to be wrong, it responded as most people do when faced with a difficult past: repression and silence. The course of events in Indochina after 1975 transformed the new left from a badge of honor to be worn on all occasions to an embarrassment. The truth is that we did not predict what the Vietnamese Communists would do with their victory, even though there was no dearth of well-grounded opinion in the United States that correctly foresaw the catastrophic consequences of a Communist victory. We chose not to believe those voices. We were wrong and they were right. Those who actively opposed the war *and* were aware of how horrible a Communist victory could be for the people of Indochina were a minority. Such cognitive dissonance was beyond the capacity of most of us.

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Generally we simply did not think very much about consequences but to the extent that we did, we all thought a North Vietnamese victory was preferable to continuation of the war.

If North Vietnamese domination had led to anything remotely decent, I'm quite sure there would be a host of American leftists rushing to take credit for the great event. Instead history after 1975 confirmed the worst fears of Americans who supported the war: a bloodbath did take place in Cambodia—and not because peasants outraged by American bombings took it out on their countrymen; an Asian Gulag was established in Vietnam; a war with China soon followed; the Soviet Union acquired a vital strategic asset in Cam Ran Bay; and the boat people made poignantly clear what we had refused to believe for a decade, namely that thousands of Vietnamese citizens really did not want to live under a Communist dictatorship. We continuously minimized and even ridiculed the idea that a disaster could follow from our good intentions and a Communist victory. When the disaster happened, our supposedly critical generation shut up. That is perhaps good taste, but hardly the moral high ground we said we always inhabited.

In the 1970s, I mulled over the 1960s with other contributors to *Telos* and *New German Critique*, hoping with them to sustain a "non-authoritarian" and democratic left. I read Solzhenitsyn and pondered the link between the romanticism of the young Georg Lukács and his subsequent attraction to communism, visited dissidents in Hungary, observed West German leftists misplacing guilt over the Holocaust by turning against Israel, wrote a doctorate thesis about Weimar and Nazi Germany, and concluded that the Frankfurt School thinkers were nowhere near as close to the truth as I had once thought. These reevaluations took a very long time and were difficult, for I was giving up a great deal.

The enduring value of the 1970s for me, and I think for many veterans of the 1960s, was that I learned again to value intellectual life and to respect ideas and scholarship. I learned that anti-intellectualism in politics is almost always the prelude to utopian and then totalitarian excesses, and that the Marxist and neo-Marxist ideas we thought to be so daring in 1968 were more often rehashes of what was daring in the late nineteenth century or in the 1920s in Central Europe. If it was an anti-authoritarian left we wanted, it already existed. Its name was social democracy, and its most recent battle against totalitarianism was the Cold War. The authoritarianism it had in mind, especially after 1917, was called communism. Anti-

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communist American liberals and European social democrats of the 1950s, the new left's main targets, were an anti-authoritarian left.

Perhaps the most important lesson I draw from thinking about the new left was that it mattered. It was not irrelevant. It was not just campus fun and games after all. There are institutions and ideals to reaffirm—a nondidactic literature and art, a nonpoliticized university, scholarship freed from ideological camps, and an intellectual establishment that has recovered its nerve and is able to speak harshly of dictatorships without double standards and to speak well of free societies, such as ours. These are not new ideals to realize, but they are particularly important to me in view of the rather different goals we championed in the new left.

Coming in

PARTISAN REVIEW

- Ronald Hayman on Sartre
- Raymond Aron: *A Memoir*
- Lionel Abel on George Steiner's *The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.*
- Fiction by Michel Tournier
- Peter Brooks on Psychoanalysis and Criticism
- Poetry by Joseph Brodsky, W. S. Merwin, and Allen Ginsberg
- Steven Marcus on Ernest Hemingway

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Peter Shaw

THE POLITICS OF DECONSTRUCTION

In the past few years deconstructionist literary criticism, after enjoying a seeming exemption from close scrutiny by outsiders, has been subjected to a number of searching critiques. As a result, the intellectual implications of the movement have begun to be understood, and it has lost its sacrosanct aura. Deconstruction has been challenged on philosophical grounds for its dismissal of traditional Western thought and identified as a threat both to literary criticism and discourse in general. Yet among the now numerous critiques of deconstruction, there has been virtually no mention of what is arguably the movement's most significant feature: its origins in radical politics.

These origins continue to go unmentioned despite Gerald Graff's 1978 essay, "The Politics of Realism," and his subsequent "Textual Leftism," which together showed that deconstruction amounted to a politically inspired attack on the philosophical underpinnings of bourgeois society. The basis of this attack was the recognition by political radicals of the degree to which certain common assumptions —that we live in an objectively knowable world and that we are able to communicate its nature to one another—make possible the day-to-day operation of society. The radicals put it that bourgeois society actually controls its populace and prevents revolution not so much by force as through its control of concepts such as these. Realistic writing, for example, even when it is "radical in content," serves this society, as Graff explains the radical argument, merely by employing "formal modes of perception that [are] conventional and reactionary." These modes lure the reader away from revolution by securing his acceptance of the world as it is.

It follows from this analysis that whoever helps to undermine the bourgeois perception of reality by attacking the concepts of logic, rationality, objectivity, and above all reality, strikes a politically revolutionary blow. To be sure, critics have been attracted to the deconstructionist mode from a variety of traditions and motives, many of them removed from politics. Yet in joining the assault on reason, they have willy-nilly lent themselves to the political agenda of deconstruction.

The aim of Marxist literary criticism has always been to make

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whatever contribution it could to the overthrow of bourgeois society. The first Marxist critics simply criticized that society through literature. Granville Hicks's *The Great Tradition* (1935) used American literature in particular. Its putative great American tradition was that of proletarian, revolutionary literature. Hicks searched the nineteenth century for writers in sympathy with the common man and critical toward business civilization. These he elevated and connected with the proletarian novels being written in the 1930s as a "fulfillment of the [radical] spirit" of the earlier literature. Together the old and new, he proclaimed, pointed to a revolutionary future.

The crudities of such an approach were apparent at the outset. Hicks's great, proletarian tradition was at best a minor strain in American literature; his approach, moreover, was hopelessly inadequate to deal with first-rate literature. Something more sophisticated was called for, and the continental theorist Georg Lukács supplied it. In *Studies in European Realism* (1948), he largely set aside the political intentions of the writer. Émile Zola, for example, may have been a "writer of the left," but he was less useful to revolution than the royalist, Balzac, whose work could be treated as an exposé of the rotten core of bourgeois society. Lukács's departure did not entirely alienate him from a critic such as Hicks, for in addition to sharing a revolutionary purpose, both championed realism. But Lukács recognized the need to write about art in terms that would satisfy the intellectual class with something more than the transposition of political slogans to literature. His ability to develop a respectably complex theory accounts for his current popularity among Marxist poststructuralists.

The still greater subtlety of deconstruction lies in its virtual abandonment of explicit politics. Radical ideas are no longer alluded to except through the invocation of certain apparently literary terms. For example, works of literature that have come to make up the canon of accepted masterpieces are referred to by deconstructionists as "privileged texts," the implication being not only that these works hold a special position in literature, but also that because of this they deserve the same suspicion and resentment that a revolutionary would be expected to direct at social privilege.

In a similar way, other terms used in deconstruction symbolically mime revolutionary struggle, producing a symbolic drama in which a liberation struggle is conducted in the name of subjectivity and indeterminacy of meaning in the face of "authoritarian," "reactionary," "hierarchical," "tyrannical," "imperialistic," or "hegemonic"

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views of reality—terms that apply to any normative supposition that objective values or meanings exist. Whoever hews to fixed meanings is said to participate in an act of "control" in literature analogous to the control that the imperialist-bourgeois state supposedly imposes on the exploited and the downtrodden. The State of Letters is conceived of as a surrogate for the political state, and as the battle against both escalates, so too does the language of deconstruction. Thus Jacques Derrida assaults the putative controllers of bourgeois reality by saying that when it comes to critical discourse, "the police is always waiting in the wings to enforce linguistic conventions." And Roland Barthes declares that all language is "quite simply fascistic."

Most literary observers of deconstruction have contrived to ignore the unmistakably political thrust of such expressions. As a result, it was not until the early 1980s that the politics of deconstruction began to be made explicit—and then only by Marxists grown disenchanted with the alliance they had maintained with the movement. Thus Edward Said's criticism of the poststructuralists—the most prominent of whom are the deconstructionists—implied that these were critics who had always harbored politically revolutionary intentions. In Said's disappointed view, though, all of their attempts to be radical had acted to only "further solidify and guarantee the social structure and the culture that produced them." This formula of dismissal has been taken up increasingly by younger Marxists since it appeared in Said's *The World, The Text, and the Critic* in 1983, with the result that one of them could recently state that "the most current means for detecting the bankruptcy of a certain theory or method is to uncover its political blindness, its irrelevance to any program for 'radical social change.'"

One user of this formula—the British Marxist, Terry Eagleton—praises deconstruction for having helped to "keep the revolution warm," but dismisses it all the same. Revealingly, he traces the origins of deconstruction to the failed revolutionism of the 1960s, most particularly the student uprising of 1968 in Paris. "Unable to break the structures of state power," he writes, literary critics sympathetic to the student movement developed in poststructuralism a movement that "found it possible instead to subvert the structures of language." For Roland Barthes in particular, he reports, the enemies of the student movement "became coherent belief systems of any kind."

In *Marxism and Deconstruction* (1982), Michael Ryan similarly pointed out that "deconstructive philosophy emerged at the same

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time as the New Left." Ryan gave it as his opinion that "deconstruction cannot be called a New Left philosophy," but continued (in what he considered to be terms of praise):

> Nevertheless it projects certain recognizably new leftish traits: an emphasis on plurality over authoritarian unity, a disposition to criticize rather than obey, a rejection of the logic of power and domination in all their forms, an advocation of difference against identity, and a questioning of state universalism. It goes one step further and argues for the flawed and structurally incomplete, if not contradictory, nature of all attempts at absolute or total philosophic systems.

No more than the symbolically revolutionary language of deconstruction itself has the forthrightness of this and other recent statements by Marxists breached the virtual gentlemen's agreement among critics to not mention the politics of deconstruction. Indeed, the philosopher John Searle omitted politics altogether from his persuasive refutation of deconstruction in *The New York Review of Books* in 1983. A year earlier in the same journal, Denis Donoghue came no closer to explicitness than ending his critique of deconstruction with the following, obscure afterthought:

> And there is the politics of Deconstruction: like Structuralism, it is antibourgeois, and particularly hostile to the ego-psychology which a bourgeois ideology is supposed to offer its members as a consolation prize.

Donoghue appears to comprehend the politics of deconstruction, but he does not quite reveal to the reader what they might be.

The few observers to speculate on whether deconstruction and Marxism are related to one another have tended to be dismissive. As a British critic put it, "deconstruction is so obviously anti-dialectical: how could it possibly join forces with 'dialectical materialism'?" (Despite this particular dismissal, English critics, writing as they do from within a considerably Marxified academic environment, are by and large far closer to the French than the Americans in their openness about the politics of deconstruction.) Writing in 1983, the American critic Robert Alter similarly asked if there was "some deep affinity between Deconstruction and political revolutionism." Not really, he

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decided. Derrida's announced radicalism must be regarded as no more than a common position in French intellectual circles. And while it is true that Jonathan Culler, the author of *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism*, the most frequently cited introduction to the subject, "in fact was an S.D.S. activist in the late '60s," he should not be regarded as a radical either, since for him "the last true revolution is feminism." From a theoretical point of view, Alter added, "it is hard to see how Deconstructive analysis, conceptually removed as it is from historical process, can address itself to concrete political realities." Of course it is exactly the point of deconstruction to circumvent concrete political realities in favor of another kind of assault on culture: success or failure is no measure of this decidedly political intention.

When one turns to American deconstruction, the political element is obscured because of a problem of definition. The movement in this country is understood originally to have comprised a core of members within the Yale University Department of English. But there remains considerable disagreement over how the department's members—Harold Bloom, the late Paul de Man, Geoffrey Hartman, and J. Hillis Miller—should be described. It is often said that Bloom does not really practice deconstruction. Denis Donoghue has gone so far as to assert that the only American member of the Yale department who did was Paul de Man (Jacques Derrida is a regular, but visiting member of the department), and that "Geoffrey Hartman is one of the most vigorous opponents of Deconstruction." On the other hand, when the Yale critics collaborated on a volume of their work in 1980, they titled it *Deconstruction and Criticism*; all of them, moreover, can be found listed in the bibliographies of deconstruction (as can Edward Said).

The problem of defining who is a deconstructionist is typical of the confusions that have prevented clear statements about the purposes of deconstruction. Yet it is not really necessary to puzzle over the differences among its practitioners. For the unnoticed fact is that most writing done under the names of poststructuralism and deconstruction concerns itself very little with the act of analysis itself. That act has been described by Vincent B. Leitch as the undermining of confidence in discourse through a technique of "repetition." As Leitch explains:

> The deconstructive interpreter carefully traces and repeats certain elements in the text, which may include the figures, the con-

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> cepts, or the motifs in a work. As he or she repeats the selected elements, the critic unleashes the disruptive powers inherent in all repetition.

Having rendered the text before him inchoate, the deconstructive critic characteristically concludes that he has succeeded in exposing the naivete of the old uncertainties about writing: that authorial intent is communicated through the written word and that readers share a common experience of reading.

But has he actually done so? The truth is that one can read through the Yale critics—or through Edward Said, Roland Barthes, and Derrida—or one can read through the journals *Boundary*, *Critical Inquiry*, *Critical Texts*, *Diacritics*, *Enclitic*, *Georgia Review*, and *Glyph*, without finding more than a few stray lines that trouble to perform the deconstructive task described by Leitch. Instead, the vast preponderance of writing in the field concerns theory.

The virtual absence of practical criticism does not make deconstruction's claims any less challenging, but it does put them in perspective. Rather than testing particular poems or prose texts, as is sometimes made to seem the case, deconstruction challenges traditional views of literature through general propositions. Inasmuch as these propositions have been intimately bound up with politics from the beginning, one can hardly be said to understand them in the pure isolation with which deconstruction is treated by most literary critics.

When it comes to placing the Yale critics, it follows that their theoretical agreements are far more important than the often mentioned variations among them. Thus Harold Bloom, whose relationship to deconstruction is usually said to be the most problematical of all, advances a personal theory of what he calls "misprision," which comes down to asserting that all interpretations of literature, including his own, are really misreadings. (Paul de Man, along with Stanley Fish of Johns Hopkins, holds that all readings are correct, which amounts to the same thing.) Like his colleagues, Bloom discusses his theory far more than he practices it. But more importantly, misprision is quite compatible with deconstruction's overall program of spreading indeterminacy.

Where does the theoretical compatibility of the Yale critics with deconstruction place them with respect to the radical politics of the original French deconstructionists? As we have seen, in the new Marxified climate of literary opinion deconstruction itself has been

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found politically wanting. As for Yale in particular, Jacques Derrida has expressed disappointment that his colleagues there have served "the dominant political and economic interests of American society." The Yale group, though, tends to be castigated not so much for failing to bring about social change as for not trying to do so in the first place. Thus Terry Eagleton has recently indicted the Yale critics for a reading of Derrida that "eradicates all traces of the political from his work." (On the other hand, Eagleton is willing to grant that Geoffrey Hartman "has explicitly repudiated such an accusation, and there is evidence that de Man believed himself to be a socialist.") Frank Lentricchia gets at what particularly annoys radicals about Yale when he criticizes Paul de Man for having "no *desire* to employ the literary in the redemptive work of social change" (italics added).

By refusing to acknowledge the politics of deconstruction, then, the Yale critics eventually disgusted the radicals. But the same refusal involved them in silence about the political uses to which their work was put. Were they chiefly naive, self-deceived, or evasive about their place in the radical scheme of things? Whichever it was, by the 1980s explicit accounts by literary Marxists were making it impossible even for Yale any longer to ignore politics. Furthermore, American literary criticism in the 1980s grew to be at least as politicized as deconstruction at its inception in France in the 1960s. In fact, the politics of literary theory in America reached the point where William E. Cain could recently report with approval:

> In literary theory circles, Marxism has acquired a special status and is now the predominant subject and system of belief in debates about the politics of interpretation. No one dares to utter a liberal doctrine.

Perhaps the most important result of Marxist dominance has been the demystification of deconstruction. Writing as a Marxist, Terry Eagleton is free to turn the tables and accuse deconstruction of the same authoritarianism that it routinely finds inherent in bourgeois criticism. Deconstructionists, writes Eagleton, exercise "the *privilege* of those who can afford not to know" and "the *authoritarian* abrasiveness of informing you that you do not know what you are saying" (italics added). More insultingly still, Eagleton writes that they deserve the Gramscian epithet "hegemonic," the ultimate in poststructuralist political damnation.

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In the wake of such remarks, the critique of deconstruction from other, nonpolitical quarters, has taken courage. One can now find in print, for example, vigorous denials of the doctrine that the imperfections of communication add up to chaos. Critics, while granting that no written communication is perfect, and that readers derive varying impressions from what they read, no longer accept that these circumstances justify concluding that the message can never get through. Substantially, it is now being said, we do understand one another. More generally, although it is undeniable that certain logical propositions can always be called into question, the French critics Foucault, Piaget, Barthes, Derrida, and others have no warrant, as Geoffrey Thurley puts it in his book, *Counter-Modernism in Current Critical Theory* (1983), for asserting "that because some statements cannot be verified no statements can."

With arguments such as these on the one side, and the radical attack on the other, it is not difficult to predict the decline of deconstruction. But it would be a mistake either to regard deconstruction as a passing curiosity, or to declare as Terry Eagleton does that deconstruction merely "cancels all the way through and leaves everything just as it was." Such conclusions may possibly be justified if one is measuring direct political results in the world at large. But from the more enduring perspective of ideas, things are by no means just as they were.

In the first place deconstruction now reigns as the one prestige subject capable of drawing graduate students of literature to extracurricular study groups in literary theory, where the subject inevitably devolves into structuralism. Generations of such students by now have written dissertations and built careers either wholly or partly under the influence of deconstruction. The more nimble of them may prove able to step along to the next literary orthodoxy, but even these few will, in the normal way of academics, continue to transmit the concepts and techniques they absorbed in graduate school.

In the second place, deconstructionist attitudes, especially skepticism about the existence of any firm knowledge and the replacement of rationality by subjectivity, have spread beyond literary theory to virtually every corner of literary study. A recent book on the subject of scholarly biography, for example, calls on the researcher to depend on "an intuitive sense of his subject, although this often means the manipulation of data." Such "freedom from fact," we are informed, "has recently become celebrated by contemporary biographers as a new methodology."

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Not only biographers are celebrating freedom from fact these days, but also scholars throughout the humanities and social sciences, while some theorists of science edge in the same direction. Thus deconstruction proves to have provided the philosophical justification for a broad movement away from Western objectivity and rationality. In this perspective it has to be judged a success, having helped to bring about a number of results in the intellectual world: a retreat to relativism of values; distaste for the assertion of either intellectual authority or its correlate, social control; and an instinctive attraction to the delegitimizing tendency, whether in the intellectual, social, or political realm.

Faced by deconstruction's unmistakable challenge to the integrity of their calling, academics not only failed to defend themselves, but also shirked their clear responsibility as scholars: that is, to report fully on the true nature of the phenomenon set before them. Instead their responses ranged from ignorance to credulity, reflecting either innocent self-deception or submissiveness in the face of intimidation—or a bit of each. In retrospect it appears that the peculiar aura of distinguished difficulty and intellectual superiority surrounding deconstruction functioned in a positively intimidating manner. Just as at present "no one *dares* to utter a liberal doctrine" when literary theory is discussed, so from the beginning observers retreated in the face of what Michel Foucault has revealingly called the "*obscurantisme terroriste*" of Derrida's prose style. One understands Foucault to be referring to the fact that any straightforward remark about Derrida's work, or about deconstruction in general—let alone a remark critical of either—is certain to be greeted with the most powerful weapon in the academic arsenal: intellectual contempt. This contempt, moreover, is always likely to be compounded with the ever ready charge of political reaction.

Both of these techniques of intimidation were used against E. D. Hirsch, whose literary theory amounted to asserting that it is possible to arrive at a close approximation of an author's intended meaning. One critic called this assertion "the intellectual equivalent of aggressiveness and a wish to dominate" and branded it as "part of an ideology of society that is authoritarian and hierarchical." Terry Eagleton called Hirsch "authoritarian and juridical" and added, predictably enough, that "the aim of all this policing is the protection of private property."

Just how much support Hirsch received from his non-deconstructionist colleagues can be surmised from the following remark by

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the deconstructionist Frank Lentricchia, in his book, *After the New Criticism* (1980):

> As a theorist who speaks unapologetically for rational values, E. D. Hirsch stands pretty much by himself in the landscape of contemporary theory.

No more devastating reflection on the academic response to deconstruction could be made.

The supine intellectual posture of the academics will be familiar to anyone who recalls the variety of capitulations with which they had greeted the student movement out of which deconstruction grew. In the face of that assault, professors had swiftly abandoned their central pedagogical and scholarly convictions. They conceded that authority was by its nature coercive and that subjective impressions were as valuable as reasoned analysis. Once the countercultural assault had receded, the professors restored the status quo ante. They dropped the experimental courses they had begun to offer, returned to the traditional curriculum, and once again found reasons to demand academic work in exchange for academic grades. But capitulations have their consequences. The edifice had been shaken, and few were any longer confident about the solidarity of its underpinnings.

At present deconstruction, a product of the second, professorial wave of the student movement, promises to recede from importance in its turn. But if deconstruction failed to dislodge society's sense of reality, it was only because that sense proved to be ineradicably engrained in human nature. Once again the academics responsible for standards in their profession have been little more than bystanders as developments ran their own course. The Marxists undoubtedly have a point when they attribute the failure of deconstruction in part to its having been institutionalized by the academy, for it is true that deconstructionists have been published, favorably reviewed, tenured, and promoted—all in an academic spirit of bland receptivity that has had the ironic effect of softening the movement's impact. It is hard, though, to take encouragement from the Marxist critic who attacked Gerald Graff's *Literature Against Itself* by expressing his dismay at a "growing reactionary movement in the academy to recover the ideals of logic, reason, and determinate meaning and to repudiate the radicalism of the sixties and early seventies." No such movement has ever developed.

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Edouard Roditi

MEETINGS WITH WALTER BENJAMIN

When I first met her in Berlin in 1930 or 1931, Jean Ross, the real-life model for Sally Bowles in the fiction of Christopher Isherwood, was a very lively English girl who spoke fluent French and had already learned to speak very passable German. Having spent much of her childhood and adolescence in British-occupied Egypt, where her father was stationed, she displayed none of the peculiarly provincial English insularity that characterized Christopher, who mistook her more worldly wisdom and greater ease in the company of foreigners for the kind of moral looseness and sexual promiscuity that he appears to have attributed to her in his fiction.

Jean was managing to earn her living in Berlin with a variety of odd jobs, among which private tutoring in English conversation was the most important, and she had thus acquired, before we met her, a number of German friends in different walks of life. One of these friends was a rather handsome, outspoken, and independent German girl who worked as an occasional freelance secretary for several German journalists and other writers, among whom she named Walter Benjamin. He was particularly interested in the writings of Marcel Proust and even considered the task of perhaps undertaking a German translation of *Remembrance of Things Past.* In the course of one of my conversations with Jean and this girl, I mentioned my own interest in Proust, and they both decided that my knowledge of French and of Proust's writings and social environment might be of interest to Benjamin. I was thus in the company of Jean and Christopher a few days later when this girl turned up at Jean's home with Walter Benjamin.

Throughout his literary life, Christopher again and again expressed his distaste for the writings of Proust, and he was obviously bored throughout our meeting with Benjamin, who questioned me at great length on several details of Proust's social environment and personal habits, while Christopher chatted in English with Jean or fidgeted and squirmed on his chair. In any case, Benjamin's appearance and personality were rather colorless and unprepossessing, in fact like those of a somewhat conventional and pedantic German-Jewish academic. After this meeting, Christopher even declared to us that Benjamin was a dreary and depressing bore, and it is in this

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respect significant that Benjamin failed to impress him enough to reappear as a fictional character in any of the stories based on Christopher's own life in Berlin.

Perhaps because Christopher discouraged us from further meetings with Benjamin, I made no attempt to see him again in Berlin. Even in the best of circumstances, Benjamin was rarely, I admit, a very cheerful or amusing conversationalist. When I chanced to meet him again a few years later as a refugee in Paris, he proved to be even gloomier and more pedantic than on the occasion of our first meeting in Berlin.

Benjamin now had written to my friend Léon Pierre-Quint, the author of the first critical work on Proust, written and originally published in French before the posthumous publication of the concluding volumes of *Remembrance of Things Past.* Although forced to abandon his project of translating Proust into German now that, as a Jew, he no longer would be allowed to publish in Nazi Germany his translation of a half-Jewish author such as Proust, Benjamin was still interested in Proust's life and writings and was anxious to meet and consult Léon as an expert in this field.

Not being sure of Benjamin's ability to express himself clearly in French or to understand French, or of his own ability to understand Benjamin's German or to express himself clearly in German, Léon asked me to be present at their meeting in his home so as to be available, if necessary, as their interpreter. But Léon neglected to inform me of the name of the German writer with whom he had this appointment, so that both Benjamin and I were quite surprised to be thus meeting again.

Both Benjamin's French and Léon's German proved to be sufficiently fluent for their exchange of ideas and information. To me, the contrast between Léon's slightly dandified manner and dress and Benjamin's dowdy and drab appearance was striking. Although they both had equally pale complexions, Benjamin's was that of a careworn man who spends all his days in dusty and air-polluted libraries, all too rarely exposed to sunshine and fresh air, while Léon's, as he nervously dangled his monocle on its black silk cord, was obviously nurtured, although no more weathered, on the very best and most expensive of shaving creams and toilet waters.

In the course of their conversation, Benjamin mentioned that he was now working in Paris on another project: a book, which he never completed before his death, on the theme of "Paris as the Capital of the Nineteenth Century." First published under this title

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as a brief essay, it has been reprinted, together with all of Benjamin's notes for the final version that he never managed to write, in two heavy volumes titled *Das Passagenwerk*.

He explained to us that this project was involving him in extensive research concerning the vast nineteenth-century economic and demographic expansion of the French capital. The pioneer gaslighting of its streets had already earned it, in the days of Baudelaire, the title of *Ville Lumière*, which it still enjoys. Among other sources of information, Benjamin was studying the political writings of such revolutionary leaders as Auguste Blanqui, who developed the tactics of building barricades and of the street-fighting that spread from Paris in 1848 to Berlin and other European capitals, and the writings too of those later responsible as townplanners for the many broad thoroughfares that were built under the Emperor Napoleon the Third, with the intention of rendering Blanqui's tactics obsolete. Benjamin also expressed to us his great interest in other characteristics of nineteenth-century Paris, such as the numerous arcaded sidewalks and *passages* that made it possible for its citizens and foreign tourists to window-shop pleasantly even on rainy days.

Here I interrupted Benjamin to point out that the concept of such arcaded sidewalks and glass-roofed *passages*, similar too to London's Burlington Arcade and Piccadilly Arcade, was derived, of course, from the covered bazaars that Napoleon had seen in Egypt and Syria and that earlier eighteenth-century travelers already admired in Constantinople, Aleppo, Isfahan, or elsewhere in the Orient. Ultimately, all covered bazaars of the Islamic world were derived from those of imperial Rome and Byzantium. Edouard Fournier, a nineteenth-century historian of the architectural history of Paris, had pointed out in 1853, in *Paris Démoli: Mosaïque de Ruines*, that as many as one hundred and forty-four such glass-roofed *passages* or arcades had been built in central Paris by 1827. Most of these, by now, have been demolished in the course of later real estate developments. Built on Napoleon's return from his Egyptian campaign, the aptly named Passage du Caire was the first of these, it seems, to have appeared in Paris.

At the time of my Paris meeting with Benjamin, I happened to be writing in French, in collaboration with my friend André Ostier, a book entitled *Le Tour de Paris en Quatre-vingt Jours* that was doomed never to be published. It described many little-known or obsolete aspects of the city, often including details of their history, and we had already collected a lot of material on the history of some of these

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passages of the older sections of central Paris. I now mentioned our project to Benjamin, and he expressed interest in it, so that we agreed to meet again a few days later, when I would be free from my work to spend a Saturday afternoon as his guide in older neighborhoods where, between the Palais Royal, the so-called Grands Boulevards and the Boulevard de Sébastopol and the Boulevard de Strasbourg, a number of the more picturesque of these *passages* had survived. Unfortunately, the shops that now lined many of them on both sides were no longer as elegant and prosperous as they had been in the days of Balzac, Nerval, Heine, and Baudelaire. A couple of years later, Louis-Ferdinand Céline in *Mort à Crédit*, his second published novel, described in great detail the desperate stagnation of trade in one of the most desolate of these nineteenth-century *passages* of central Paris.

When we met again, Benjamin took ample notes in the course of our afternoon expedition and expressed surprise at the number of such *passages* or arcades that I was able to reveal to him. He reminded me that his own native Berlin could boast of only one, leading off Unter den Linden, and he was amused when I told him that I could remember two of the tenants of some of its premises: Gorodetzky's, which had been until 1934 Berlin's most famous Kosher restaurant, and Hofmaler Fischer, formerly the official portrait painter of the Hohenzollern Imperial family and its court, in whose windows the most atrociously conventional and tasteless society portraits were always displayed.

One of the *passages* of central Paris that I showed Benjamin was the very desolate and dilapidated Passage du Saumon, which he later mentioned several times in *Das Passagenwerk*. There we passed by the entrance to the Hotel du Saumon, which may have been frequented by Proust, as well as Albert Le Cuziat's more widely known Hotel Marigny, one of the real-life models for Jupien's *Temple de l'Impudeur*. Saïd, who ran this establishment as a homosexual brothel, was standing in the doorway. He certainly recognized me, since I had but recently interviewed him and shown him a photograph of Proust in a fruitless attempt to find out whether he could remember ever having seen Proust as one of his customers. But Saïd now refrained, true to his principles of discretion that contrasted with Albert's garrulous gossip, from appearing at all overtly to know me and from greeting me. Somewhat prudishly, I likewise refrained from pointing out to Benjamin that Saïd's establishment may well have been one of those that Proust visited and that suggested, in *Time Re-*

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captured, some of the details of the fictional layout of the hotel where Jupien provided the Baron de Charlus with the none-too-willing young male prostitute, who was expected to chastize Charlus so exquisitely and to confess to having committed crimes, such as the knifing of a concierge, that he would have been ashamed, as a modest working-class boy, ever to attempt.

This expedition proved to be my last meeting with Benjamin, who may have considered me too frivolous or still too intellectually immature for further and less factually informative discussions. I found him, in any case, rather reticent, and I must admit that I remained for many years unaware of his significance as a major contemporary thinker, perhaps because, in both our Berlin and our Paris conversations, he limited himself to questioning me, without making any statements that might have suggested to me that he was more than a meticulously exact literary critic and social historian. As a refugee in Paris, he appears moreover to have failed to develop any close friendships in French literary circles. Even Léon Pierre-Quint, as far as I know, never saw him again. Many years later, when I was helping Léon's sister, after his death, to file and catalogue his archives (which were ultimately donated to the Bibliothèque Nationale), we found only one short letter from Benjamin, asking Léon for an appointment that may then have occasioned our two Paris meetings.

Only after World War II did I learn from Theodor Adorno in Frankfurt-am-Main how Benjamin failed in 1940 to escape to Spain from German-occupied France, where he feared that he was in any case doomed, so that he preferred to commit suicide at the Spanish frontier. Others, who were perhaps more resourceful or less prone to despair, chose to face the risks of a refugee's life in Marshall Pétain's France, and some of them even managed to survive with the help of the Resistance, or else by obtaining false identity papers and disappearing in the underground. But Benjamin, it seems, was too much of a pessimist to take such chances.

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George F. Chapline

"STAR WARS": AN INSIDER'S REPORT

An unsettling aspect of the last half of the twentieth century is that the Western democracies face some ten thousand nuclear warheads aimed in their direction, each of which would be capable of destroying an entire city. Fortunately, a policy of nuclear deterrence has served the West well in discouraging the Soviet Union from unleashing this arsenal. Increasingly, though, influential elements of Western society are unhappy with the fact that the Soviet Union could decimate the Western democracies in a first strike attack. This unhappiness has taken two forms: 1) the desire to limit or reduce the number of nuclear warheads on each side—an approach generally known as "arms control"; 2) proposals to build strategic defensive systems—an approach brought to the fore by President Reagan's famous speech of March 1983. Although the advocates of arms control don't seem to want to admit it, the net result of these two approaches should in first approximation be the same—namely, a reduction in the number of nuclear warheads reaching each side in the event of war. Of course, the advocates of arms control would argue that arms control is a more soothing approach in that it leads to decreased tensions and a spirit of cooperation between the two sides. Why then, would one be interested in the possibility of strategic defenses?

One possible answer is that to significantly reduce the numbers of offensive nuclear warheads without simultaneously working on defensive systems would be suicidal. The point is that the leverage of defensive systems increases dramatically as one reduces the number of offensive nuclear warheads. It should be kept in mind in this context that the Soviet Union already has a capable antiballistic missile. We don't know the capability of the ancillary radars, but it is conceivable that the Soviet Union could develop the capability of countering our submarine-launched ballistic missiles in the not too distant future. This would allow the Soviet Union to gain a first strike advantage unless the West also deployed a defensive system. Therefore it seems that arms control and strategic defense are inextricably linked.

This still leaves the question of whether it is a good idea to turn

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away from a policy of nuclear deterrence. I would like to defer further discussion of this question until the end. For the moment I will simply assume that the motivation for considering defensive systems is that many people would like to see a drastic reduction in the effects of a first strike nuclear attack by the Soviet Union.

This brings us to the question of the technical feasibility of strategic defense. Following the President's March 1983 speech, this has been a subject of heated controversy in intellectual circles. While a knee-jerk negative reaction to the President's speech from his political opponents was to be expected, the declarations of political opposition were (and are) often accompanied by (and sometimes camouflaged by) assertions that a defense against ballistic missiles is not technically possible. Such assertions are in fact quite irrational in the sense that one could not possibly know whether defense against ballistic missiles is possible in the absence of a concerted effort to try and make a workable defense—exactly what President Reagan proposed.

The whole situation is reminiscent of the turn of the century when it was widely believed in academic circles that heavier than air flight was an impossibility. Actually, the problem of building an airplane at that time was mainly an engineering problem. Nevertheless, the Wright brothers had to build the engine for the first airplane themselves, because no engine manufacturer of the day wanted to expose himself to the ridicule of being involved in a project that was well known in sophisticated circles to be crazy. There are good reasons for believing that the problem of defense against ballistic missiles today is mainly an engineering problem.

There are four technical developments that make the feasibility of an effective defense against ballistic missiles much more plausible today than it was in the 1960s when the question of a defense against ballistic missiles also was widely debated. These are 1) the nuclear-pumped x-ray laser; 2) the free-electron laser; 3) high-resolution space-based telescopes; and 4) compact super computers.

The nuclear-pumped x-ray laser is a novel concept for directing some fraction of the power produced by a nuclear explosion into a narrow x-ray beam. Because the energy released in a nuclear explosion is huge, only a very small fraction of this energy needs to be converted into a laser beam in order for the beam to have devastating effects over distances of thousands of kilometers. Because nuclear devices are relatively compact and lightweight, the nuclear-pumped x-ray laser offers the hope of a space-based defense against

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ballistic missiles for the continental United States. Proposals for other kinds of space-based defensive systems suffer from the fact that low earth satellites are very vulnerable to attack. Nuclear-pumped x-ray lasers may be "popped up" on rockets at the onset of attack or deployed in a distant orbit where they would be less vulnerable to attack. Of course, it should be kept in mind that x-ray laser technology is still in the research stage, and the practical feasibility of x-ray laser weapons remains to be demonstrated.

While the scientific demonstration of a nuclear-pumped x-ray laser triggered the chain of discussions that led to President Reagan's speech, one of the main objectives of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) is to find a non-nuclear means of strategic defense. Perhaps the most promising approach in this respect is based on the construction of large ground-based free electron or excimer lasers. These lasers would generate high energy pulses of infrared on near ultra-violet light that would then be reflected off space-based mirrors.

Free electron lasers utilize the fact that the power in narrow high voltage electron beams can be efficiently converted to laser radiation by passing the electron beam through an undulating magnetic field. High power free electron masers (coherent sources of microwave radiation) already have been demonstrated. It is believed that high power sources of infrared or even visible laser radiation can be constructed by increasing the voltage of the electron beam. This type of technology is particularly promising for defending Europe against intermediate range ballistic missiles such as the SS-20. Indeed, a free electron laser defense for Europe could possibly be built in the next ten years—on a time scale that is typical for the introduction of new tactical weapons. On a longer time scale free electron lasers might be scaled up to sizes that would be useful for defending the continental United States.

Another type of laser that might be useful for strategic defense is the excimer laser. These lasers utilize the fact that noble gases such as krypton or xenon don't normally combine with other elements to form molecules but will do so if they are excited with electron beams. These metastable molecules, called excimers, can decay to the free atoms emitting powerful flashes of ultraviolet radiation in the process. Excimer lasers have an advantage over free electron lasers in that they are much smaller in physical size for a given output power. On the other hand they are less efficient in converting electrical energy into laser radiation; therefore, they need bigger

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power sources. It remains to be seen whether free electron lasers or excimer lasers are the best type of laser for strategic defense. Wisely, the Strategic Defense Initiative Office is funding programs to develop large ground-based lasers of both types.

I have emphasized ground-based lasers because space-based lasers don't seem to make much military sense at the present time. The reason is that the current cost of putting material into earth orbit is so high that it would be prohibitively expensive to provide a space-based laser with sufficient shielding to make it invulnerable to attack, for example, from ground-based lasers.

The vulnerability of space-based lasers does highlight what may be the most serious technical objection to strategic defense—namely, the vulnerability of space-based assets. Even ground-based lasers require space-based mirrors to redirect the laser beams coming up from the ground against distant targets. In addition, almost any sort of strategic defense system will require space-based target acquisition and tracking systems. In order to make strategic defense a viable concept some means must be found to make these space-based systems invulnerable to preemptive attack. There seem to be two possibilities at the present time for protecting space-based assets against preemptive attack: 1) popping them up from the ground at the onset of attack; or 2) putting them in distant orbits and using stealth technology to evade radar or infrared detection. Because both mirrors and target tracking and acquisition systems are relatively lightweight, both of these deployment modes are available for these systems. Indeed, it would be desirable to use both types of deployment in order to maximize the survivability of these crucial systems.

To summarize the technical prospects for strategic defense, there do not seem to be any insurmountable physical obstacles in the way of an effective strategic defense system. Whether it will be practical to construct a system that is effective, though, remains to be seen. Of course, this depends to a large extent on how reliable such a system is required to be. It has been claimed that any practical strategic defense would be fairly leaky; for example, ten percent or more of the attacking warheads would get through. However, apart from faith in the inevitable unreliability of man-made systems, I don't see that there is any rational basis for such claims. In fact, there do exist man-made systems whose complexity, sophistication, and reliability probably exceed the requirements for an effective strategic defense system. An example of a highly complex man-made system that worked essentially perfectly from the time it was turned on is the AT&T elec-

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tronic switching system. It is significant that Solomon Buchsbaum, Vice President of Bell Telephone Laboratories, is generally optimistic concerning the software and reliability requirements for a strategic defense system. Assuming that the physical requirements for a strategic defensive system can be met, I believe, on the basis of what has already been achieved in computer technology, that a system could be built that would destroy 99.9 percent of the incoming missiles.

Let us now consider the question of whether deployment of strategic defense is a good idea. Insofar as unilateral deployment of strategic defenses by the United States will enhance nuclear deterrence, such deployment can be viewed as beneficial. The real question, however, is how would the Soviet Union respond to such deployment? Before discussing this question, I would like to comment on the allegations that unilateral deployment by itself would be "destabilizing."

It is admittedly true that unilateral deployment of strategic defenses would disturb the strategic balance between the United States and the Soviet Union and would possibly give the United States a first strike advantage. It is questionable, though, whether this is likely to increase the likelihood of nuclear war. Since our nuclear deterrent capabilities would be enhanced by unilateral deployment of defenses, it seems implausible that the Soviet Union would be induced to launch a first strike by our deployment. (It would certainly not be induced by any rational form of reasoning.) On the other hand, it would not be rational for the United States to launch a first strike under these circumstances for several reasons. First of all, a strategic defense system would not be perfect, and, therefore, launching a first strike would *guarantee* destruction of a certain number of American cities. Secondly, the probability that a strategic defense system would fail completely is too high to merit its use as a shield for a first strike. Thirdly, at any given time the United States would have the option of strengthening its defenses as a means of decreasing the difference in damages sustained between striking first and responding to a first strike.

Of course, these arguments would become much weaker if an insane political leader were to come to power in the Soviet Union or any other country for that matter. In such a case, if strategic defenses were only partially deployed, it might appear rational in time of crisis to launch a first strike if a first strike by the other side appeared imminent. It is likely, however, that even in such a situation the United States would not be able to bring itself to strike first. One way to escape having to make such a difficult decision is to

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deploy strategic defenses fully before an insane political leader comes to power.

Let us now turn to the question of how the Soviet Union would respond to a unilateral deployment of strategic defenses by the United States. Critics of the SDI and the Soviet leaders themselves both claim that the Soviet Union will respond by increasing their offensive forces. Of course, this challenge to the SDI is credible only if the Soviet Union actually could overcome our strategic defense system by increasing its offensive forces. This presumes, among other things, that the United States could not respond to a build-up in offensive forces by slightly increasing its defenses. It should be kept in mind in this connection that in the present era of large budget deficits it seems unlikely that the United States Congress would fund, much less authorize deployment of, a strategic defense system unless it were highly cost-effective. This means simply that the cost of the defensive system is significantly less than the cost of the offensive missiles it is intended to destroy.

An example of a cost-effective strategic defense system would be a constellation of one hundred x-ray laser satellites placed in high altitude earth orbits so as to make them invulnerable to preemptive attack. If each satellite could attack thirty or more missiles during their boost phase, then the defense would almost certainly be cost-effective. An ICBM with multiple nuclear warheads costs approximately one hundred million dollars. Thus if an x-ray laser satellite could be built for less than three hundred million dollars—which seems very likely—the defense would enjoy at least a ten to one cost advantage. With a ten to one cost advantage the Soviet Union could not afford to overcome the defensive system by increasing its offensive forces. Indeed, the United States alone would easily be able to counter any conceivable buildup in offensive ballistic missiles, including, for example, the extreme case in which the entire industrial capacity of the Soviet Union were devoted to producing ICBMs.

It would appear that a cost-effective ballistic missile defense system would in fact render ICBMs obsolete. This does not mean that all means of delivering nuclear weapons would be denied to a determined aggressor. But it does mean that the most threatening and precarious aspect of the nuclear standoff between the Soviet Bloc and the Western democracies would be alleviated. It is almost certainly true—and this was the main point of President Reagan's March 1983 speech—that the world would be better off if ICBMs didn't exist.

One difference between unilateral deployment of strategic de-

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fenses and arms control is that the Soviet Union would almost certainly respond to our deployment of strategic defenses by deploying a strategic defense system of their own. This would have the possibly beneficial effect of restoring strategic balance between the Soviet Union and the United States. Beyond this, such a development should not be viewed with much enthusiasm because it would dilute our retaliatory capabilites. Depending on how effective a Soviet antiballistic system appeared to be, we could respond either by developing penetration aids for our offensive ballistic missiles or by building up our retaliatory forces in other areas, such as cruise missiles.

One should, of course, also worry whether deployment of strategic defense systems by both the United States and Soviet Union will increase the likelihood of a global nuclear war. It should perhaps be pointed out that since the expected level of destruction is much reduced with an effective strategic defense system in place, the probability of global nuclear war would have to increase drastically in order to negate the positive effects of strategic defense. While I don't believe we understand what determines the probability of nuclear war well enough to rule out this possibility entirely, I don't see what factors would lead to a drastic increase in the probability of nuclear war either. On the other hand, it probably would be prudent to retain some level of retaliatory forces in case there were some factors affecting the likelihood of nuclear war that we didn't foresee.

Given that we must retain nuclear retaliatory forces even with a strategic defense system in place, it is reasonable to ask again why we should bother to continue research on a strategic defense system. I believe the principal reasons are *a*) it is conceivable that we can build a defensive system that would make current and future generation Soviet ICBMs obsolete; and *b*) damage levels in case of a Soviet first strike would be greatly reduced.

As a final point, the critics of strategic defense have consistently underestimated the political significance of the SDI. The attitude of the Soviet leaders toward arms control negotiations has already been dramatically altered. It is clear that the Soviet leaders fear that strategic defense is a threat to the military superiority of the Soviet Union. The critics of the SDI assert that this is "destabilizing." I am persuaded that, to the contrary, a partial disarming of the Soviet Union is a very attractive political goal. In addition, the technology of strategic defense will serve civilization ultimately by protecting our cities against nuclear attack.

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Cheryl Benard

WOMEN'S ANTHROPOLOGY TAKES THE CHADOR

Western social science's view of women's place in other cultures has undergone a number of shifts. Early explorations tended to be dominated by male anthropologists, with two results: either they had difficulty getting access to the other society's women and were dependent on hearsay, secondhand accounts, and speculation, or they provided such a tendentious interpretation that they revealed more about their own values than about those of their research subjects. This is not to say that no balanced and interesting studies were done; however, in societies where sexual segregation is practiced, it was impossible for even the best-intentioned male researcher to get an authentic picture. And there were abundant scholars of the less well-intentioned kind in the field. Unfortunately, some of the most prominent anthropologists belonged to this second group. (For example, Levi-Strauss was prone to trying his hand at other disciplines, such as art criticism, coupled with sexism, and making observations such as his description of Aranda art: "dull and studied watercolors one might expect of an old maid." I suspect this is fair neither to the Australian Aranda nor to artistic unmarried ladies. Evans-Pritchard's diatribe against emancipation in Britain and elsewhere on the globe, *The Position of Women in Primitive Societies and Other Essays in Social Anthropology*, needs no elucidation from me.)

The first Western women to apply themselves to the topic of women's position in other cultures were not social scientists. They were the wives of men working or traveling in foreign regions: missionaries, diplomats, merchants, or adventurers. Their accounts tended to be either wholly negative, appalled at such practices as polygamy and infanticide, and seeing them as the inevitable barbarism of heathen peoples; or ambivalent, fascinated by the exotic strangeness but repelled particularly by the deviations from Western sexual norms. When women began to enter the discipline of anthropology in larger numbers, they made a conscious effort to counterbalance the male bias prevailing there. The aim of the emerging "anthropology of women" was not only to portray the objective social conditions of women in other cultures, but also to elicit the women's subjective perceptions of their condition; to search out the "often ill-

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defined and seemingly vague, possibly repressed, alternative ideas which women may have about the world."[1] Some militant work came out of this period, with feminist anthropologists hot on the trail of a postulated matriarchal past and volumes of work being done on alternate interpretations of menstrual taboos, segregation practices and prevailing divisions of labor.

But recently, the pendulum has seemed to be swinging back again. I had been noticing over the past few years that some rather puzzling hypotheses were being forwarded by female anthropologists; hypotheses that made me suspect Phyllis Schlafly had taken over the anthropology departments of a few leading universities. This was underscored for me when a feminist journal proposed to me that I ought to consider, in an article reporting the health problems of women in the Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan, some of them resulting directly from the cultural values and practices enforced by these men, whether improvements in the relative status of women might not threaten to bring about a "sissification" (their word) of Afghan Pashtun warrior society. While the notion that women have to die in childbirth and remain illiterate for a society to retain its authenticity is certainly thought-provoking, I was equally interested in discovering what this question revealed about the present state and thinking of feminist social science. To this purpose, I have reviewed some of the work done by Western women on one other kind of society, the Islamic, and I believe an interesting pattern emerges.

The first women to travel to the Orient and leave a written report behind were not feminists, though their adventurousness and unconventionality often distinguished them from the mainstream women of their times. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, numerous women toured the East, most often accompanying their husbands but sometimes on their own initiative. Their reports are marked by a profound ambivalence between fascination and protest, between finding these other women's lives colorful and intriguing, and finding them appalling and outrageously unfair. Early works suffered from a strong class bias—it was only the wealthy women that the European ladies got to see. Lady Montagu, for example, speculated in the year 1718 on whether the harem might not compare favorably to Western marriage practices where, if one had an

1. Shirley Ardener (ed.), *Perceiving Women*, London 1975, p. xxi.

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awful husband, one had to spend a lot more time with him than one would in the East.[2]

Elizabeth Cooper, who visited villages and hospitals all over the Islamic world around the turn of this century, had a much more encompassing view. She was distressed at the practices she encountered, including female infanticide, forced marriages, and abandoned divorcees, but did not want the readers of her book, *The Harem and the Purdah*, to think her a feminist:

> "If the Western woman comes . . . with the fair gifts of intellectual advancement and broadened life, her Eastern sister presents the even more precious charms of obedience, modesty and loyalty which are the priceless jewels in the crown of the world's womanhood."

The opposite mix of ambivalence was more common: to admire everything about the East *except* the subordination of women. Isabel Arundel was ecstatic when her husband, the diplomat and adventurer Richard Burton, was posted to the Mideast. She wore Oriental clothing, furnished her home in the Oriental style, and would in later years outrage her neighbors in the English countryside by burying her husband in an Arab-style tomb. At the same time, Isabel was not the sort of person to be content with the Victorian ideal of femininity, much less the Arab one. In her home in Syria, she forced Arab guests to sit on chairs and serve tea and cakes to their wives, an educational effort that led to a rapid decline in the numbers of her Arab visitors. But on the whole, Isabel, like most women of this earlier period, found their visit to be so exciting and exotic that judgement was suspended in the light of the overwhelming strangeness of their adventure.

In the 1970s, the emerging "anthropology of women" moved into the discipline and went out into the field with all the élan and critical energy of the women's movement of that time, to which it considered itself affiliated. Existing theoretical models were examined, their bias exposed; methodological approaches were devised that would better register the perceptions and experiences of traditional women; empirical data and explanatory frameworks that seemed to

2. Quoted in *Women in Islam* by Naila Minai, N.Y. 1981, p. 45.

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point to the historic and natural roots of the subordination of women were challenged. A great number of studies described the lives, customs, and values of women in their own right, and not as they were described by male society. The specific forms of their oppression, and any means of objective or subjective resistance they may have devised, were also subjects of studies (for example, *Towards an Anthropology of Women* edited by Rayna Reiter, and *Women, Culture and Society* edited by Michelle Z. Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere). Like the research that came out of the academic wing of the black movement, the anthropology (and the sociology) of women took a skeptical view of "value-free" science, arguing that it had too often been a trick on the part of the power-holders to rationalize existing inequities.

The literature of women's anthropology is readily accessible and familiar, and I will not try to review it here. I will confine myself to one study that can serve as an illustration for the whole school. I am choosing the example of Patricia Jeffery's study of Muslim women in India, *Frogs in a Well, Indian Women in Purdah*, because she very explicitly dealt with the questions of partisanship and research. Jeffery did not intend to study the situation of women at all; she was there to document genealogies. The subject matter thrust itself upon her when she "saw the trauma it was for these women even to cross the street alone, their anxiety about running into men on the street, their fear of going out in daylight." Unasked, these women complained to Jeffery that their veils were hot and constricting, that their small sons had to lead them about on the streets as though they were blind because they could not see the pavement, that on the ceremonial occasions so important to this traditional religious community the men set up tents for themselves and left women to stand, heavily veiled, in the sun beyond the boundaries of the actual celebrations. They complained that their daughters, no matter how well they learned, had to leave school at the onset of puberty, and that their husbands would not allow them to stop having babies, even after fourteen or fifteen births and even if the last births had been so hard that they nearly died. Patricia Jeffery documents her own response to these revelations and her struggle to hold on to scientific neutrality. "Male social scientists like Goody talk blandly of the 'seclusion of women'," she observes, "a fate which, I hazard, he would find unpalatable."

Feelings of personal involvement such as these were at the heart of the women's anthropology of this period. But in the more recent literature, they are absent. What one finds instead is a revival of the notion of value-free science, updated for the 1980s by the linkage to

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the doctrines of noninterventionism and nonethnocentrism. The result, all too often, borders dangerously on apologetics, and Evans-Pritchard would be delighted at this renaissance of his approach. In this new phase of anthropological research about women, women researchers themselves appear to be operating on the following spoken and unspoken set of guidelines: that their own presence in the other culture must cause as little disruption as possible, and that they should try to blend unseen into the fabric of daily life there; that they must on no account express or even form any judgement whatsoever about the conditions they may find there; and that they must do nothing to make the women of these countries question, let alone criticize, their situation.

Some of these instructions, I contend, are merely unrealistic; others, and these are more dangerous, amount to a new sexist bias in anthropology, and one that is more effective because its agents are women, including feminist women.

Can a researcher minimize his or her presence in the field to such a degree that it will not impinge on the findings? Western women who do field work in Islamic countries try to adapt to their environment by adopting local dress, including the prevailing styles of veiling. The clothing of other cultures has always held a special appeal. Even the feminist activist Kate Millett, rushing to revolutionary Iran in defense of her sisters, tells us, in her book *In Iran*, that she was unable to resist clandestinely trying on a chador and examining, before the mirror, its effect on her appearance. The women anthropologists who adopt local dress for the duration of their field study, however, claim to be succumbing not to natural human curiosity but to the necessities of their research. Their own reports indicate that this image is not quite correct. When Carla Makhlouf came to North Yemen, she asked the village women whether they thought she should wear a veil. They laughed heartily, she reports, and urgently advised her not to do so since she would surely look ridiculous in it. Everyone knew she came from a country where this custom was not followed. Makhlouf is unusual in that she asked; most of her colleagues simply assume that camouflage is required, and a great many of them wore local clothes against the advice or express wishes of their hosts. Sarah Hobson, in *Family Web*, reports on the collective incomprehension that overtook her village when she decided to adopt their style of dress. Very reluctantly, one of the women agreed to help her shop for such an outfit. Her first public appearance in this dress caused amazement, but the gathering crowd of women soon

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spotted the safety pins with which Hobson, unused to this garment, had to hold it together. Hobson was now an incorrectly attired native instead of an uncategorizably attired Westerner.

Reports of traditional women trying to talk the Western woman out of her voluntary gesture of conformity are frequent in the literature. It seems that traditional women, far from feeling more comfortable at such a gesture, actually feel ill at ease when confronted by an outsider wearing their clothes. In traditional society, clothing is very much linked to status and position, and there is no suitable costume for her position. An educated foreign woman running about in a farm woman's clothes does not put the farm woman at ease and may, in fact, offend her propriety more than if she were wearing her own clothes or, best of all, a costume meeting local rules of modesty but constructed out of her own clothing. Another problem is that traditional women's clothes are not always easy to wear, and it may not be a simple matter for an outsider to pick up the nuances of how to drape which cloth in the company of which people in which situations and at what times of the day.

Besides blending into the landscape in terms of clothes and outward appearance, social researchers of this new school of thought also strive to avoid showing any reaction that could be construed as a criticism or as disapproval. They try to remain passive instruments seeking only to learn and record alien customs without getting involved in assessments or discussions or comparisons. This effort proves to be, in actual practice, particularly illusory. The research reports make it clear that, no matter how unobtrusive the anthropologists hope to be, their presence is very challenging to local women. A lot of studying and observation goes on in the opposite direction, too, and the women under scrutiny are much more than just passive subjects of skillful observation. The presence in their midst of a woman who obviously leads a radically different life, and who is accorded courtesies by male society—including their own men—that they themselves could never hope for, often prompts them to bring their grievances about their lot as women in that society to the visitor. If that visitor belongs to the new school of postfeminist neutrality, she may not want to hear these confidences at all.

The women in the Iraqi village visited by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea had much to ponder once she arrived. True, she came in a veil and believed herself to be following all the rules of seclusion and segregation, but no knowledgeable Iraqi eye was so easily deceived. When invited to a gathering by one of the women, for example, she

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would accept immediately without even asking her husband for permission – that was a dead give-away right there. She had no children, but seemed neither humiliated nor fearful of being divorced when queried on this sensitive point. And while she might wear the veil, nonconformities of detail abounded: why was her hair long everywhere but short in front (bangs)? Why did she wear "men's shoes" (flat Oxfords)? Since her husband was clearly so accommodating, why didn't she demand more gold jewelry?

In addition to her entertainment value, the foreign guest also raises elemental questions about one's own lot in life. When Fernea's husband had to take an overnight trip, he arranged for a woman from the sheikh's household to stay with Elizabeth. The woman was shy, and conversation was sparse, but when the two women had gone to bed and the lights were out, Amina suddenly wanted to know, "Is your husband kind to you?" When Fernea, puzzled, said that he was, her companion "sighed and burst into tears," much to the dismay of her hostess, and proceeded to tell her about a life that had been marked by little male kindness.

Elizabeth Warnock Fernea submitted to the dictate of nonpartisanship because she was in Iraq only as a wife and had been warned not to jeopardize her husband's research by making waves.[3] Present-day women anthropologists, however, operate under self-imposed injunctions. Their determination to avoid neocolonialist judgements can lead at times to dizzying feats of apologetics. A good example is Sherri Deaver's essay, "The Contemporary Saudi Woman." To begin with, the author announces that she hopes to avoid prevailing stereotypes about Arab society. To this purpose, she proposes two hypotheses: *1)* that segregation on the grounds of gender does not necessarily imply female subordination; and *2)* that one does not need to possess social power to have a positive self-image. So far, so good. Unfortunately, Deaver does not really intend to test these hypotheses; she intends to defend them. She does not exactly distort the facts, but she certainly stretches them. For example, Deaver contrasts the personality traits that are considered by Saudi society to characterize men with those that they consider descriptive of women. Here are the male traits: strong, capable of making decisions, capable of abstract and logical thinking. Now here are the female traits:

3. *Guests of the Sheikh, An Ethnography of an Iraqi Village* by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea N.Y. 1965.

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weak, easily led astray, emotional, illogical. Deaver, who presumably would be distressed if she were denied tenure at her university on the grounds that women are too emotional and illogical to be good scholars, would like us to view these personality ascriptions, transposed to Saudi Arabia, as "complementary" and not as discriminatory to women. They don't necessarily imply, she asserts, that men are superior, no; weak and strong, logical and illogical are simply different kinds of traits. Next comes the question of social power. Women in Saudi Arabia, as even the most benevolent eye cannot fail to observe, are completely banned from the public sphere. Their sexuality is a matter of obsessive concern, and Deaver gives examples of "honor killings," some of them perpetrated against the innocent victims of circumstantial evidence. Honor, Deaver observes in this context, is a male characteristic; shame is a female one. Men control women by restricting their freedom of movement. Society is male. Having said this much, Deaver is hard put to defend her second hypothesis. This is how she manages: at social gatherings, she acknowledges, women are always excluded. However, they prepare the food for the men. Therefore, by preparing the food well or badly, they can affect the reputation as a host that their man (husband, brother) has. Therefore, they exercise a degree of power over male society. (My own hypothesis is that Deaver, if someone told her that American women should stay at home and exercise power over their husbands' careers by ironing their shirts well or badly, would be less than pleased.)

Deaver is so intent on avoiding critical thoughts that she even ignores clear statements by the Saudis themselves. She reports, for example, that "Saudi men boast about the power they have over women." But Deaver overrides this. "Male and female," she concludes, "are different types of people" and cannot be compared. Imagine this statement out of the pen of a Western liberal and referring to racial apartheid in South Africa, "Just different types of people."

The abstention from criticism has as its second aspect a kind of counterinsurgency commandment. Anthropologists are not to make women dissatisfied with their culture; enough of the Third World has been paved over by secondhand Western consumer trash. There is, of course, a lot to be said for this argument. As it is being applied in this case, however, there are two problems with it. First, it is suspiciously selective. Health clinics, vaccination programs, literacy campaigns, agricultural training programs, none of these are being rejected per se. The tacit assumption is that it is all right for men to

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"modernize," as long as women remain pure and untouched repositories of traditional values. The second problem is that there is a difference between cultural judgements and moral judgements, and while the distinction may be extremely difficult to make, that is no excuse for just dismissing it.

"The primitive woman has no choice," Evans-Pritchard smugly noted. And while it may not be the task of anthropology to give her one, neither is it anthropology's task to reconcile her with injustices by pretending that one believes things are fine as they are. If vaccinations are available, and people take their sons and not their daughters to have them, then this meets Johan Galtung's criteria of "structural violence," present when a society has the means to improve the survival chances of a certain group but refrains from doing so. As in the past, anthropology has paved the way for other Western emissaries, and in contributing to the taboo on change for women, current anthropology is encouraging a structure of Western developmental aid that "produces fatter sheep and more powerless women," as one participant in a United States aid project self-critically noted.

Arab women social scientists are vehement in their criticism of women's traditional place. Even the traditional women themselves are able, if asked, to articulate their grievances. Why, then, have Western women succumbed to the ban on criticism?

First, I believe, they are affected by a kind of Third World trauma that has overtaken all Westerners of liberal persuasion. The sight of the Third World masses marching through the streets in millions to demand the return to the chador, the reinstatement of religion, and a chance at martyrdom on the warfront has left many Western observers with the paralyzing feeling that their standards of understanding are really and totally inadequate.

This conclusion has been abetted, in the case of Western women, by certain unfortunate encounters with a particular group of women from the Third World. I refer to the women who typically turn up at international women's conferences, frequently in the official delegations of their governments. The position they take at these fora may be paraphrased roughly as follows: Whatever problems we have, and we cannot remember inviting either your unnecessary comment nor your unwelcome assistance in solving them, are your fault in the first place. It was Western interference, colonial and neocolonial and culturally imperialistic, that ruined the situation of women as it ruined everything else in our society. Furthermore, your situation as women here in the depraved West is worse than ours,

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since you are nothing but sex objects. You would do well to concern yourselves with your own problems, as we are far better off without your interference.

This line of argument is distressing to Western women. It neatly activates Western guilt; it contains enough truth to sting, and there is really no adequate reply one could make. Thus, a handful of Iranian women in chadors can silence an entire symposium by standing up and insisting that fundamentalism is precisely what they as women want and need. There is a lot to be said about these encounters, but I will confine myself to two observations.

First, the notion that a woman is qualified to speak for all the women of her population merely by virtue of coming from that part of the world shows how undifferentiated the Western view still is. "A Muslim woman was there and she said . . ." would hardly be evidence for anything, if that culture were not still so remote for us that any emissary seems noteworthy.

Second, the cultural backlash currently being experienced in many Third World societies is itself an important topic for social science research. Unfortunately, it appears that a backlash of our own is preventing this research from developing. In the process, self-imposed taboos on the part of women researchers are contributing to tacit value judgements as biased as the interventionism they oppose.

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Edith Kurzweil

LETTER FROM ABROAD: PSYCHOANALYSTS ON THE COUCH

Every country adapts psychoanalysis to its own ends and, in the process, rewrites the contributions of its own psychoanalytic heroes. In fact, reevaluations of Freudian history currently are fashionable in a number of European cities—to celebrate Freud's local disciples, to inflate their own contributions to psychoanalytic lore over those of all others, or to praise the openmindedness of the city fathers. And where psychoanalysis was met with nothing but hostility, as for instance in France or Italy, some current emphases tend to stress the strong psychiatric traditions which kept psychoanalysis at bay, while others focus on the influence of Catholic morality. In other words, one sometimes gets the impression that psychoanalysis is called in to elevate and boost local traditions. But every one of the current reinterpretations to a large extent relies on reminiscences and anecdotes, in order to illuminate specific theoretical twists and turns. Yet, even where the influences of the milieu are being exaggerated, the media coverage of meetings on the subject serves, once more, to spread psychoanalytic knowledge. This helps Freud's movement to live on—albeit in unanticipated forms.

The adaptive qualities of psychoanalysis were particularly noticeable at the recent meeting in Trieste on "The Culture of Psychoanalysis: A Historic Review." The city, whose monuments reminding us of past glories during the Austro-Hungarian empire contrast sharply with its "frontier" status, recently was celebrated as the home of Italian psychoanalysis. For Edoardo Weiss, its native (Jewish) son, was the only Italian disciple in close contact with Freud: Ettore Schmitz, we recall, immortalized him in his novel, *The Confessions of Zeno*. These were the reasons why psychoanalytic historians got together to recall not only the circumstances of Weiss's and Schmitz's lives, but also Italian resistance to psychoanalysis, and particularly the Fascists' attitudes, which forced Weiss's move to Rome in 1932 and to Chicago in 1939. The writer Giorgio Voghera and a number of Italian psychoanalysts—among them Cesare Musatti who had been one of the founders of the Italian Psychoanalytic Society in 1932—attended both festivities and scholarly meetings. So we heard a great deal about psychoanalytic theory and history and about applications

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to literature, music, and film criticism. We even saw the classical film by Pabst (allegedly supervised by Karl Abraham in the early 1920s), whose naive psychoanalyst and even more naive patient had us all laughing.

But the most interesting aspect of the meeting was the presence of seven Hungarian and six Yugoslav psychoanalysts. The latter told us how Freud's ideas are being applied in a number of general and mental hospitals, in outpatient clinics, and—minimally—in private practice. Clearly, the Yugoslavs aim to cure symptoms rather than reach the unconscious, with a "dynamic approach" that supplements "narcoanalysis, hypnotic sessions and other therapies." Many of their hospital therapists, however, were thought to be badly trained, and "to project their own conflicts onto their patients." In other words, our own classical Freudians might lump them all with the "wild analysts." But while so-called wild analysis in America primarily exists outside the establishment, it apparently is within it in Yugoslavia. The Hungarians, on the other hand, officially have reinstated Freudian psychoanalysis. (It had been disbanded in 1949 at the height of the "cult of personality.") Now, they have twenty-five psychoanalysts and fifteen candidates, all of whom are affiliated loosely with the International Psychoanalytic Association. Although the Hungarians must work for the state and in a psychiatric setting, they are allowed to have private patients in psychoanalysis. According to Gyoergy Hidas, the president of the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Society, they were fortunate that Imre Hermann (a disciple of Ferenczi) went into "internal emigration," and thus managed to train a handful of psychoanalysts. Now, it seems, the government values their work. All in all, the Hungarians not only represented but glorified the so-called Budapest School, which among others fathered the influential English analysts Melanie Klein and Michael Balint.

A few days later, Frankfurt celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of its Sigmund-Freud-Institut. Established in 1960 by Alexander Mitscherlich, its mission was twofold: to do research into psychosomatic medicine and into psychosocial mechanisms, by having psychoanalysts and sociologists plumb the depths of the German psyche, and thus to learn how to "overcome" its Fascist past. Whether or not this mission was accomplished mattered less at this meeting than did the fact that Frankfurt, once again, had a new (and more psychoanalytically oriented) variant of the former Frankfurt School. To the outside world, the fact that the French psychoanalysts Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel and Bela Grunberger (a former Hungarian and disciple of

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Ferenczi) were among the featured attractions proved that international Freudianism is alive, and that the Germans have been rehabilitated. But it papered over the split among these reconstituted Freudians, which was manifested by the fact that Margarete Mitscherlich—who not only collaborated with her husband during the planning of the institute but was Germany's earliest leading training analyst—was not asked to play a major role. Still, that Dieter Ohlmeier, the president of the German Psychoanalytic Verein, publicly commented on this problem did show that Freud's spirit lives on.

Next June, Ohlmeier and Anna Maria Accerboni, who presided at Trieste, will join many other analysts and historians at the first meeting of the International Association for the History of Psychoanalysis in Paris. There, I believe, the question of who owns Freudian history will be fought out. And in the process, old myths will be revived and new ones will be created.

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BOOKS

A STUDY IN CONTRAST

ONE EARTH, FOUR OR FIVE WORLDS: REFLECTIONS ON CONTEMPORARY HISTORY. By Octavio Paz. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $14.95.
THE HEAVY DANCERS: WRITINGS ON WARS PAST AND FUTURE. By E. P. Thompson. Pantheon Books. $19.95.

I am coupling these two books, by E. P. Thompson and Octavio Paz, not because they have much in common, but because they occupy opposite ends of the intellectual spectrum, thus providing a study in contrasts. Thompson, the English labor historian, is a leader of the peace movement. Paz is the distinguished Mexican poet, literary critic, and social commentator. Thompson's book is essentially an argument for a special cause, Paz's a speculative excursion into modern history and politics.

Thompson's early work has received some praise, but it also has been criticized as a narrow Marxist interpretation of early English history. However, his recent political writing, particularly the propaganda for the peace movement, suffers from the restrictions that special pleading imposes. To prove his case for the peace movement, Thompson makes a number of questionable statements, and he has to resort to casuistry and to a disingenuousness out of place in so knowledgeable a writer. His logic is often faulty too, and ultimately his appeal is to the natural fear of both individual and collective death. In these respects, he does not differ much from other peace activists, except that he is more sophisticated, more learned, and writes much better.

It is difficult to convey the quality of Thompson's polemics without reproducing the text itself. But some sense of them might be communicated by indicating his method of argument and by citing some of his more dubious statements.

Thompson's tone is that of a reasonable and undogmatic person. He is ready, for example, to admit that the Soviet Union is not a democracy and that the peace movement is banned there. He also cites the criticism of him by the Russians—which proves only that while the Russians are ready to exploit the peace movement for their own purposes, they demand full endorsement and do not accept even the mild criticism of the sort he directs toward the Soviet Union.

Thompson claims that he wants both superpowers to disarm,

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but since, as he admits, there is no possibility of exerting the same pressure on the Russian government that is being directed toward the West, he joins those who end up by saying that the West should take the lead in disarming no matter what the Soviets do. Thus, while denying that he is against unilateral disarmament, he actually comes out in favor of it. In fact, the fundamental logic of his position leads one to unilateral disarmament, for he insists that since nuclear war is unthinkable, we must do anything to prevent it—including the total disarmament of the West. In short, if any kind of surrender is preferable to war, we are left with no choice but to give up in advance. It does not seem to have occurred to Thompson or to his dedicated followers that one way to prevent nuclear war and to preserve the freedom of the West is to make sure that the Soviet Union is not tempted by the weakness of the West to start a war.

This constitutes the pattern of Thompson's reasoning. But he does not rest on this kind of logic, and he bolsters it with a number of one-sided observations. For example, he equates the Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe with the American troops in Western Europe; he asserts that deterrence is useless; he says that the peace movement will grow in Russia again, despite the outlawing of it; he rebukes Solidarity and distorts its views by claiming it is a tool of Reagan; he says that America is worse than the Soviet Union and that NATO is worse than Russian missiles; he dismisses the French intellectuals because they have not been taken in by the peace movement; he calls for the "Swedenization" of Western Europe and insists that "Finlandization" is not such a bad situation to be in. And so on. He has his own interpretation of détente; he thinks it is a process whereby America and Russia get closer together. On the whole, he paints a rather more sympathetic picture of the nature and aims of the Soviet Union than its history warrants; he keeps repeating the disingenuous explanation of Soviet behavior—that it is paranoid and feels threatened by the West. One is led to wonder whether all aggressive and expansive regimes have been paranoid; but surely it is going too far to invoke a psychoanalytic concept that is applicable only to individuals to describe a totalitarian country.

It need hardly be pointed out that behind Thompson's rather arbitrary views is a systematic bias, for despite his seeming show of objectivity his conclusions tend to be on one side of the political fence. Nor is this surprising when one considers his political history, recently pointed out by Gertrude Himmelfarb in a striking piece in *The New Republic* (February 10). Thompson is no longer a member of

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the Communist Party, but unlike those whose break has been complete, he is still a Marxist and, despite his mild criticism of the Soviet Union, can scarcely be considered an anticommunist.

Octavio Paz is in a different realm. He is not only an enormously gifted poet, but also one of the few surviving men of letters—a dying breed excellently described in John Gross's book, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*—with a universal mind and a disdain for fashionable thinking.

His new book is a collection of essays dealing with a number of central historical and political subjects. It does not include any literary essays, though Paz is a superb critic. There are essays on Europe, on America, which he calls the imperial democracy, on the Soviet Union, which he refers to as the totalitarian empire, and several essays on Latin America. All of them are marked not only by an awareness and sophistication about the political state of the world, and a kind of surgical objectivity, but also by what might be called a melancholy and lofty wisdom. He reminds one of such men of letters as Orwell and Trilling, in his ability to grasp the essence of cultural history and to transcend political details by reaching for those generalizations that illuminate the life of a whole country and an entire epoch. Surrounded as we are by platitudes and generalities and the warped messages of intellectual propagandists, it somewhat tempers one's pessimism and despair about the state of cultural life to find someone of Paz's stature still among us.

At the very least, Paz's humanism and his clarity about the totalitarian menace is refreshing. He has no illusions and spreads no false hopes about the Soviet Union, or Cuba, or Nicaragua. But he also lifts the discussion to a more panoramic view of the contemporary world.

Thus, in comparing Russia and America, he goes beyond the obvious differences between a brutal police state and a democracy. He sees the Soviet Union as essentially a static society (quoting Castoriadis's characterization of it as bureaucratic stasis) and has little hope of a peaceful transformation. On the other hand, his view of America as a land of perpetual change is quite suggestive, summing up as it does the faults and the virtues of American society, both in its cultural life and in its foreign policy. And while he counters the anti-American myths about this country, he is not reticent, and is quite perceptive, in noting the weakness of our shifting actions in international affairs and in pointing to the abysmal effects of the media

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and the movies, both of which he sees as forms of hedonistic voyeurism. On the whole, there is a kind of high-minded justice in his appraisals of American history, so that the criticism, while not sparing, at the same time does not diminish his admiration for American democracy.

Also interesting, though not entirely new, is Paz's analysis of the special combination of religion, morality, and politics that determines most American attitudes and politics, though I think he is not sufficiently aware that religion in America tends to be evangelical. More original and quite striking is his observation that pacifism is the reverse side of terrorism, as both, says Paz, are expressions of nihilism. Interspersed throughout the book are such penetrating remarks as that détente with Russia does not change anything, and that intellectuals do not have better political records than politicians. Indeed, says Paz, liberals today are mouthing the stale simplifications about Central America that they have proclaimed in every situation in the past when communists led revolts against authoritarian or democratic regimes. But these insights are only the sophisticated foundation, lacking in so many writers, for the historical insight that permeates the essays in this book.

One reservation I have about Paz's views is that they do not recognize sufficiently that by criticizing both the communists' role in Central America and the American effort to combat it, he in effect leaves us in a state of political paralysis. Perhaps this is due naturally to his looking at these problems from a Latin American perspective, which involves a certain amount of ambivalence. But, as we have come to recognize, writers must have roots as well as an international vision.

Paz also is often abstract in his discussion of political problems and rarely offers any concrete solutions. On the other hand, it is to his credit that he is not a member of that part of the liberal community that is ever ready with instant—and knee-jerk—panaceas. Obviously he does not conceive it as his intellectual role to provide immediate answers to our complex—and often insoluble—problems. And perhaps in a time when we are bombarded by simple and facile answers, we should welcome a more philosophical and speculative effort—one that at least clears the ground of false assumptions and chic ideological stands.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS

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A CONNOISSEUR OF FEAR

WHITE NOISE. By Don DeLillo. Viking-Penguin, Inc. $16.95.

Writing of death, Don DeLillo takes one's breath away. A private man issuing a strangely private kind of fiction, he is the closest thing we have to an Atomic Age Melville. That rarest of birds, a novelist on fire with ideas—and an outlaw epistemologist to boot—he uses his fictional excursions as occasions to think aloud in shadowed sentences, speak in modern tongues, plumb mysteries, fathom depths. In book after cryptic book, DeLillo circles obsessively around the same grand and implacable themes—language, ritual, breakup, death. How to make sense of randomness or piece together identity? How, in a centrifugal world of relativity, to steady oneself with absolutes? How, in the end, to get across the untellable?

The DeLillo universe is an ordinary world transfigured by extraordinary concerns, a quotidian place seen in the terrifying white light of eternity. Thus *White Noise* is furnished with all the suburban props of the all-American novel: an amiably rumpled middle-aged professor, his plump earth-motherly wife, bright children from scattered marriages, a nuclear family in a pleasant postnuclear home. Their story is unlikely, however, to be mistaken for a fifties sitcom. The academic, Jack Gladney, teaches Advanced Nazism at the College-on-the-Hill; the matriarch leads adult education classes in posture; Gladney's three exwives all have ties with the intelligence community; and the fourteen-year-old eldest child of the household, Heinrich Gerhardt, has both a receding hairline and a philosophical bent—on his first appearance in the novel, he solemnly proclaims, "There's no past, present or future outside our own mind. The so-called laws of motion are a big hoax. Even sound can trick the mind."

Nothing in DeLillo's world is casual, nothing free of occult significance. Dark forces swirl around the bright, plastic artifacts of Anytown, U.S.A., and the country seems nothing but a gleaming library of portents. Bills, bank statements, the brand names of cars are recited as if they were mantras; tabloids are read as fragments from an American Book of the Dead; the television is consulted as a mystic oracle in the dark. The very title of the book, we learn, refers to death: the static of our lives is thus the sound track of our dying.

Yet of all the subversions of the everyday, the nightmare turns on the American Dream, the most unnerving comes when the Glad-

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neys pile into the family station wagon and head off on what resembles a picnic. It is in fact a nuclear evacuation. The huge cloud of escaped poison gas that drifts through the novel's central episode as symbol, prophecy, white whale and man-made black death all in one seems at first to be the stuff of routine sci-fi apocalypse (though, in a harrowing, but not unexpected irony, this book came out at the same time as the Bhopal disaster). Yet the effect of the rogue chemical is almost entirely internal. In the wake of the fugitive cloud, Gladney brings up pulsing stars on a computer. What does that mean? The poison has entered his system; he has come to incarnate death.

It is said that DeLillo is funny, but his is the funniness of peculiarity, not mirth. It is, more precisely, the terrible irony of the lone metaphysician, rising to a keening intensity as he registers the black holes in the world about him. In *White Noise*, as in all his novels, DeLillo absorbs the jargon of myriad disciplines and reprocesses them in a terminal deadpan. His is a hard-edged, unsmiling kind of satire. It is not user friendly. And where Thomas Berger, for example, trains the same kind of heightened sensibility on low-down Americana, setting loose an antic concatenation of events that unravels the world and triggers a resistless cycle of repercussions (this is what happens when Archie Bunker makes a pass at Clytemnestra), DeLillo has no time for anarchic pratfalls, Aristophanic gambits, non sequiturs. His humor is pitch black. The National Cancer Quiz is on television. The local college offers courses on "The Cinema of Car Crashes." On family outings, Gladney reads *Mein Kampf* in the neighborhood Dunkin' Donuts.

Just as DeLillo's characters are often not people so much as energies or eccentricities with voices, just as his suburbia is a crowded set of signs fit for a moonlighting Roland Barthes, so his speech is not normal discourse as much as a kind of rhetoric pitched high, a collection of phantom sentences, a chorus of texts without contexts. And his (charnel) house style has the cool metallic sleekness of a hearse: it is all polished angles, black lines, sunless planes. No wasted motion. No extraneous matter. No scraps of the regular world. Words in DeLilloese are stripped dry, sheared clean, given a deadly precision:

"Am I going to die?"
"Not as such," he said.
"What do you mean?"
"Not in so many words."

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It is this stark tonelessness that accounts for the terrible beauty of much of his writing. DeLillo does not put spin on his words; he leaves them hanging—weightless, somber things full of density and gravity. Disconnected, theirs is the kind of bare, brooding blankness that suggests not numbness so much as mystery, a world not empty of meaning, but too full of it, electrically supercharged. The most conspicuous tic in a DeLillo novel, indeed, is to end chapters with a paragraph consisting of nothing but a single sentence:

> "Panasonic."
> "I am the false character that follows the name around."
> "Who will die first?"

Grist for a paranoid or a nihilist, the words simply stand there in space, mute, momentous, eerie as the pillars of Stonehenge.

DeLillo's other characteristic device is to put together words and rhythms into patterns, sequences, escalating cadences that build a mood and gather momentum and pick up in time a hypnotic and heart-stopping intensity. They turn into riffs, disquisitions, revved-up harangues. They move with the even, pounding purposefulness of footfalls down an alleyway.

This dazzle of Promethean language is largely consecrated to a single driving theme: the rising struggle between tribalism and technology. DeLillo's novels worry and worry at humanity's fight with science; DeLillo's characters are caught between the spirits of their ancestors and the gods of their computer world. The courses in "Eating and Drinking" he satirizes are no idle joke; in Gladney's world, primal instincts are threatened by a conception of progress that would transform men from animals into machines. "The greater the scientific advance, the more primitive the fear," Gladney tells his wife. Science and fear, those are the antagonists in *White Noise*; we need our fear to defeat a science that tries to conquer fear. And the most potent instrument in this contest, the original—and aboriginal—martial art, is language. DeLillo is fascinated with the ways in which language creates and recreates the world. Names nail down slippery identities; chants mass together crowds into forces stronger even than technology; language is a way, perhaps the only way, of making connections, an ordered system that can withstand the entropic pressure of the world at large. (Like Pynchon, DeLillo everywhere seeks out networks, circuits, codes, connections; and, like Pynchon,

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he knows that the man who finds connections everywhere is a paranoid.) Words, in the end, make up the fabric of our beings (and so the assurance that Gladney is not dying "in so many words" knells with particular plangency).

Above all, language, for DeLillo, is like fear: it is all we have of certainty, and of humanity. In this novelist's (largely verbal) universe, words are treated as archaeological fragments that can help us recover something of a more primitive and so more human past. Words are runes, atavistic relics, talismans with something of the sacred about them. Language is ritual; language is liturgy. It is no coincidence that the scenes from DeLillo's fiction that hum in the memory are virtuoso set pieces fashioned out of nothing but syllables: the conquest in *The Names* in which the protagonist makes love to an unwilling woman just by mouthing words to her in a crowded Athens restaurant; the episode in *White Noise* in which two professors deliver, simultaneously and in the same room, lectures on Elvis and Hitler, their words and ideas chiming and separating as in some verbal stereo system. At his most reverberant DeLillo at once explores and embodies the power, the fear of sound: recitation, repetition, incantation, words as rough magic, a way of making spells.

At times, perhaps inevitably, DeLillo's rhythms overpower him, acquire a life of their own, race so fast that they overthrow the meaning they are meant to carry. The minute Gladney is given a gun, he thinks of it as "a secret, a second life, a secret self, a dream, a spell, a plot, a delirium." Also concealed in the runaway rhetoric is the deeper liability of seeing eternity in a grain of sand: DeLillo and his characters are so eager to read the world, to invest it with significance, that they come on occasion to seem overanxious. Hardly has Gladney begun to rummage through the trash than he is off again: "Is garbage so private? Does it glow at the core with personal heat, with signs of one's deepest nature, clues to secret yearnings, humiliating flaws? What habits, fetishes, addictions, inclinations? What solitary acts, behavioral ruts?" His atmospherics stronger than his aphorisms, DeLillo occasionally builds up menace without meaning, is about profundity rather than full of it, becomes—in a word—portentous. The price he pays for his hubristic ambition is an intermittent bout of pretension; manuals for Zen and the art of emotional maintenance, his books mass-produce fortune cookies along with their koans.

Perhaps the oddest and most enduring mystery of DeLillo's remarkable novels is that, though preoccupied with plotting, they are themselves ill-plotted; portraits of a mind as searching, driven and

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ceaselessly vagrant as the voice in a Beckett novel, they have trouble with resolutions. Such, perhaps, are the treacheries of a Melvillean course. For DeLillo is determined to take on inquiries that cannot be concluded, to make challenges that cannot be met (just as Gladney resolves to wrestle with the riddle of the Holocaust while his colleagues content themselves with deconstructing detergent jingles, soda bottles, and bubble gum). Writing of the unspeakable, DeLillo is fascinated with the unanswerable. "Is a symptom a sign or a thing? What is a thing and how do we know it's not another thing?" "What is electricity? What is light?" "What is dark?" "How does a person say goodbye to himself?" The questions keep coming and coming, pushing the reader back to metaphysical basics, mocking the answering machine, refuting artificial intelligence, mimicking the manner of a child who goes instantly to the heart of the matter, and with it the heart of darkness.

Next to DeLillo's large and terrifying talent, most modern fiction seems trifling indeed. A connoisseur of fear, his novels leave a chill in one's bones. At the same time, however, it is always difficult to tell what he is about, beyond fear, emptiness, the dark. He knows his data cold; he addresses the great themes with uncommon courage (and so, at moments, heroic presumption and folly); his skills are astonishing. But where is he going, what can he do, with them? Imprisoned, it sometimes seems, within the four walls of his obsessions, he keeps on, in a sense, writing the same book, simply carrying his medicine bag of tricks and themes into a different genre, a new language, with every novel: college football or rock-'n'-roll, science fiction or international business or the academy. Thirteen years ago, his second novel *End Zone* sounded many of the same notes of foreboding that toll through *White Noise*: film clips of hurricanes and tornadoes; some all-American boys with names like "Hauptfuhrer," others burdened by an obscure need to master German; the consoling, earth-bound magnetism of the fat; classes in "the untellable."

For all that, however, *White Noise* remains a far greater book than *End Zone*, in large part because it is something more than cold and curious reason; it offsets its existential shivers with a domestic strength that is touching and true. In the midst of all the Pandoran currents and forces that pulse through the dark is a family that is vulnerable, warm bodies that turn to each other for shelter. Gladney wards off the power of the unknown by holding onto his adored wife at night; his unquiet mind is grounded, and uplifted, when he gazes upon the simple calm of his offspring—"Watching children sleep

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makes me feel devout, part of a spiritual system. It is the closest I can come to God." The professor's fears for his children as they move through a world of dangers are reminiscent, perhaps, of John Irving's Undertoad. But where Irving was coy and ingratiating, DeLillo is serious and moving. It is a shock to learn after reading his book that DeLillo has no children. All his terrors, his affections, are imagined.

DeLillo can keep one up at night.

PICO IYER

THE EYES IN HIDING

LOUISE BOGAN: A PORTRAIT. By Elizabeth Frank. Alfred A. Knopf. $24.95.

Louise Bogan's life proceeds, in this biography, with an odd headlong zoom. The childhood, spent in a series of New England boarding houses, is a bleak, puzzled time: Bogan's mother conducted a series of mysterious extramarital affairs. Adolescence in Boston is skimpily evoked: youthful Swinburnian poems, crushes on one or two teachers who were soon to be toppled from their pedestals by the idealistic young woman. Adulthood arrives in a rush: after a year in college, Bogan marries at nineteen and is a mother at twenty. The marriage doesn't last; by the mid-twenties Bogan is living in New York City, writing and publishing poems, in love with the man who will become her second husband and friends with the likes of Edmund Wilson, Rolfe Humphries, and Margaret Mead. Simply by recounting the facts, Elizabeth Frank's book seems to have gotten ahead of itself, so much has happened so fast.

Then, mercifully, the pace slows: life and book catch their breath. Tightly packed and poorly understood experience fills the first twenty-odd years of the former and fifty pages of the latter, but Bogan lived to be seventy-two, and the book extends to 460 pages. The acquisition of control, of pace, is somehow both refreshing and tedious.

The impulsive girl matured into a contemplative and independent woman. In 1935 Bogan wrote that she was:

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> happy for the first time in my life [after the break-up of her second marriage and a personal breakdown]. At peace for the first time . . . I'm just going to try to keep that way, that is all. I know it takes work. I have worked and fought for thirty-seven years, to gain serenity at thirty-eight. Now I have it. And it's not dependent upon the whim of any fallible human creature, or upon economic security, or upon the weather. I don't know where it comes from.

In a sense she did know, writing at the same time that "when one lets go, and *recognizes* the stream on which we move as the same stream which moves us within—that it is time and the earth floating our blood and flesh, floating its own child—and stops fighting against the kinship, the light flows in; peace arrives."

This sense of the mixed joys and resignations of maturity is a note struck before Bogan was well into middle age; it's maintained to the end. I'm reminded of Virginia Woolf's comment about the middle and later years of George Eliot: "Youth was over, but youth had been full of suffering." Not that the suffering ever really stopped for Bogan, but she used it:

> the process of partial disintegration is salutary, and even necessary. . . . A good look into that abyss described by so many—Pascal, Dante, Sophocles, Dostoevsky, to name a few—but never really grasped by the mind until experienced by the emotions with some expenditure of blood and tears—such a glance is all to the good, I am sure. It's just as well to know that the ninth circle has an icy floor by experience: by having laid the living hand upon it.

But it would be facile to say that Bogan transcended her recurrent depressions through her art in any simple way. Often throughout her life she felt empty, dry, despairingly affectless. The price she paid for her hardwon psychic strength is variously visible in this biography—for example, in May Sarton's wonderfully reproachful letter to the older woman (whom Sarton loved) about Bogan's psychic defenses. But the poems show sacrifice even more. A rueful renunciation of the pleasures of youth is the theme of many ("The Crows," "Song," "Kept"). The past must be mastered, but present joys get scanted in the process. To understand the past while rejecting its frivolities was a continual challenge for a writer whose inherent and cultivated reticence must have been at war with her artis-

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tic wish for truth. Bogan's 1932 journal entry seems to slam the door on truth: "The continuous turmoil in a disastrous childhood makes one so tired that 'Rest' becomes the word forever said by the self to the self. The incidents are so vivid and terrible that to remember them is inadequate: they must be forgotten." One rereads this in disbelief, but the same attitude comes out in Bogan's early concealment of her marriage and child from her New York friends, or in the fact that in July 1925 she wrote a chatty literary letter to Edmund Wilson, omitting to mention that her marriage to Raymond Holden was taking place that day.

Yet against this stonewalling is Bogan's undeniable wish to recover, understand, make use of the dreaded past. The conflict between opposing impulses kindles much of the submerged fire of her poetry.

Bogan's poetic style is distinctive; a style achieved, not merely aspired to, the constricted lucidity of which is as striking in the early books as in the later work. The sculpted feel of the phrasing, the weight and authority of the syntax, the somber rhythms abounding in spondaic pauses—these qualities make one think of Bogan's poetry in terms of materials like bronze and marble. *Exegi monumentum aere perennius!* The beauty and poise of the lines seem designed for permanence; nothing wispy or flighty here. "Get the hell out of the way of the laurel," she commands inferior poets. "It is deathless/ And it isn't for you."

The flaws in these ambitious, memorable, and often stunning poems are not Elizabeth Frank's subject, but they seem to be relevant to Bogan's strenuous psychic life. As Holden unkindly noted, hers was a costive muse. If Bogan often found herself unable to write, perhaps this was because she sternly excluded so much of life from her work. To be sure, the suppression of humble detail left space for the archetypal images that are Bogan's strength—images framed, formal, poised, anything but spontaneous. The effect is both beautiful and, eventually, a bit stifling. Certain of the lyrics are inexhaustible: one returns untiringly to the terrible horse of "The Dream," or to "Roman Fountain," or to the drifting bird of "Winter Swan," "the long throat bent back, and the eyes in hiding"—an apt emblem, surely, for the elusive quality inseparable from Bogan's beauty, personality, and writing. It is to Frank's credit that this elusiveness persists like an aroma throughout the long and well-researched study.

The myriad details excluded by a stern censor from Bogan's poems spilled over into her prose: the journals and, especially, the

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memoirs she worked at on and off for years. For getting at the buried past, Bogan relies heavily on visual recall as if focusing on her mother's hands peeling an apple will presumably evoke a corresponding emotion. But the prose pieces (posthumously edited by Ruth Limmer, in 1980, as *Journey Around My Room*) lack the magic of that cup of tea that turned out to hold all Combray. The obsessive attention to the look of remembered things ends up feeling not only forcedly literary and derivative but, however elegant, like a kind of avoidance: despite concentration on appearances, the essential emotion still proves evanescent.

When Bogan's *The Blue Estuaries: Poems 1923–1968* was reissued in 1977, Adrienne Rich hoped that we would "take a fresh look at [Bogan] against the remarkable tradition of female poetry in America." Such a look is one that on the whole Elizabeth Frank doesn't take in this book. Given some of the factitious constructs of female tradition recently posited, Frank's choice isn't wholly regrettable; certainly her sensible, low-key manner is refreshing. Yet one wants to know more about this hooded woman. Bogan's deepest silences seem to emanate from, to surround or shield her sexual core. There are a few tantalizing clues: Bogan's remark that women wrote poetry with their ovaries and hence dried up at forty is one, and her early poem "Women," written as if by an alien observer of the female sex if not the human race, is another. Do these fragmentary reflections lead us toward or away from the center of Bogan's sense of what it meant to be a writer who was also a woman? This biography, at any rate, does not tell us; perhaps none could. The image that stays with me is that of the swan, its eyes in hiding, and, in "The Mark," of the slow apples falling "unbidden, not at call"—like Bogan's precious, recalcitrant poems?

RACHEL HADAS

THE POLITICS OF TASTE

DISTINCTION. A SOCIAL CRITIQUE OF THE JUDGEMENT OF TASTE. By Pierre Bourdieu. Harvard University Press. $29.50.

Philosophers and sociologists have different modes of explicating human behavior. Their perspectives seem to contradict one

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another: philosophy's is that we act as we do because we have reasons for our actions; sociology's is that we act as we do because we are socialized into different types of society and subculture within societies. So anyone who wishes to inquire into the nature of social life must opt for one perspective or the other. And this indeed was to some considerable degree the situation in the social sciences until recently. That is to say, if the dominant view was the "sociological" one, there was nonetheless a fundamental schism between divergent accounts of human action. One reason for the persistence of this schism was that, on each side of the division in social thought, there was accepted what could be called a "thin" interpretation of what agents know about the conditions of their actions. Both views tended to equate agents' reasons with their capability to verbally give an account of the origins of their actions. However, since the convergent impact of phenomenology and of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, it has become clear that many of the things that we do knowledgeably in social life do not form part of our discourse about our reasons. They are highly intricate forms of knowledgeability geared into the capability to "go on" in the multiplicity of conventions that constitute social life. We are much more knowledgeable about what we do than even the philosophers have tended to assume; at the same time, such knowledgeability can be "recovered" only from studying the complex ordering of day-to-day social activities and attitudes. This is neither an easy task empirically, nor something which can be grasped conceptually without a good deal of theoretical sophistication.

Pierre Bourdieu has contributed perhaps more than any other contemporary writer to making such theoretical sophistication possible, and in *Distinction* he attempts to give his ideas a thoroughgoing empirical application. Bourdieu's more theoretical writings consistently stress the significance of the skilled and knowledgeable character of day-to-day activities in large-scale processes of social reproduction. He is an acute critic of what I earlier called the "sociologist's" view, since he does not regard social action as the outcome of external institutional causes. But he is an equally perceptive critic of the "philosopher's" standpoint because according to his position, although we are the creators of society, society is nevertheless not our creation. We create and recreate social institutions in large part through what Bourdieu calls "habitus"—the habitual dispositions whereby in the course of our actions we give shape and form to social conventions. At the same time, however, the social practices in which we thereby engage establish parameters for the range of our possible choices.

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Our knowledge about social life, which is embedded in the social practices that we follow, is not knowledge of extrinsically given phenomena, but constitutive of what those phenomena are. Recognizing the objectively-given nature of social institutions does not involve relapsing into an objectivism. As Bourdieu puts it: "the social agents whom the sociologist classifies are producers not only of classifiable acts but also of acts of classification which are themselves classified. Knowledge of the social world has to take into account a practical knowledge of this world which pre-exists it and which it must not fail to include in its object . . ."

The quotation is indicative of the style of the book, and indeed of much of Bourdieu's writing. Bourdieu is not an easy writer, but underneath the tortuous and often elliptical prose there lie ideas of genuine originality. These talents are fully displayed in *Distinction*, a book whose merits live up to its title. If I might be forgiven a little Bourdieu-ese, the book is distinguished not only by a distinct style of its own, but by a number of distinctive contributions that must surely lead us to rank it as one of the more distinguished contributions to social theory and research in recent years. This may sound overly playful, and I do not want it to be understood as too ironic. Bourdieu has produced a work of very considerable stature.

The subject of the book is the study of culture. But, as follows from Bourdieu's more general theoretical emphases, culture cannot be understood in terms merely of "high culture." Bourdieu's objective is an ambitious one: to provide an answer to problems raised by Kant's critique of judgement. But this cannot be done in terms of Kant's own formulations, in part because they were abstract rather than grounded in the study of real cultural practices, and in part because high culture was looked to as the foundation for cultural discriminations in general. Bourdieu is insistent that culture in the sense of high culture must be reintegrated with culture in the general anthropological sense if we are to approach these issues satisfactorily. Thus cultural "taste," like many of the terms which figure prominently in the book, has a useful double meaning. For taste means both discrimination as such and the tendency to hierarchy or exclusiveness built into norms of cultural appreciation. Bourdieu's book is thus about classical music, art, and high literature. But it is also about everyday habits of eating, dress, and leisure; about furniture, cinema, and sport. Although it is rather distant from what most Anglo-Saxon sociologists would regard as a respectable research report, it is nonetheless informed by an extensive empirical investigation into the

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habits and attitudes of different social classes in France. Well over a thousand individuals, in fact, were interviewed in some detail.

The relation between lateral and hierarchical aspects of cultural distinctions is explored via the concept of cultural capital. Just as we incorporate and refashion cultural discriminations as part of our habitual activities, so do these supply us with resources which are the bearers of class differentiations. The bearers of educational capital—that is, academic qualifications and achievements of various sorts—are always also the bearers of more generalized cultural capital, in terms of the distribution of which the class system is reproduced. A certain level of education makes available cultural discriminations which would otherwise remain unperceived, although it does not determine them. The different social classes not only consume different cultural products, they integrate their experiences differentially in relation to the discriminations they make among the qualities or experiences offered by those products. Thus whereas some of us may go to the cinema and see "an adventure film," others might see "the latest by Bresson"; some buy pictures to hang on the walls of their houses, while others acquire paintings to display in their homes. Aesthetics itself is bound up with this process. For what is "in good taste" has as its basis only that which sets it apart as the proper object of certain sorts of experiences. It is the aesthetic intention, Bourdieu says, which makes the work of art, not the reverse. There is no taste without the education of taste, and the education of taste necessarily depends upon qualities of the norms of appreciation thereby implied. There is a reciprocity of a sort, Bourdieu says, involved in aesthetic distinction. Those who are excluded from the realms of "good taste" in a certain sense connive in this exclusion, by accepting the arcane character of high culture. Popular pleasures are based upon affirming a continuity between art and day-to-day life, in which function tends to predominate over form; high culture is predicated upon opposing relationships. When Kant strove to distinguish "disinterestedness," as the basis of aesthetic qualities, from direct gratification, he unconsciously affirmed the social basis of cultural hierarchies.

The connections between cultural discriminations and class divisions, according to Bourdieu, can be reconstructed in terms of the volume and composition of capital that is differentially available—including both economic and cultural capital. Those who are "best off" in economic terms of course tend to be able to lay claim to cultural goods which they are able to define as "scarce." But a range of variations are possible. Thus those in the professions have both high

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income and high cultural capital. But the members of the dominant class itself—industrial and commercial employers—frequently depend more on economic capital than on cultural capital. The accumulation of economic capital makes available processes of social mobility which however can normally only be stabilized by the acquisition of cultural capital subsequently; thus the new rich will usually seek to have their children educated at elite schools. A number of different "conversion strategies" of such a sort are involved in the reproduction of the class structure and in changes that it undergoes. There is a constant dialectic of evaluation, devaluation, and revaluation involved in all this. For in the field of culture, all is difference; it is not the content of culture which defines its character, but the discriminations which are drawn to include certain modes of behavior or experiences as proper and desirable, and others as not so. "Distinction and pretention, high culture and middlebrow culture—like, elsewhere, high fashion and fashion, haute coiffure and coiffure, and so on—exist only through each other, and it is the relation, or rather, the objective collaboration of their respective production apparatuses and clients, which produces the value of culture and the need to possess it."

Reading *Distinction* demands its own sense of cultivation. The book will not appeal to those who like their sociology plain and unadorned. Those who find the quotations I already have mentioned too sinuous had better not try the book at all, since they are fairly representative of the manner in which the whole is written. For those who will persevere, the rewards are considerable. There is in this book an account of culture, and a methodology of its study, rich in its implications for a diversity of fields of social research. The work in some ways redefines the whole scope of cultural studies. At the same time it leaves many residual puzzles. Thus, for example, telling as they are, Bourdieu's observations on aesthetics are far from unambiguous. An effective critique of Kantian aesthetics is not the same as a critique of aesthetic theory in general; and the assertion that aesthetic discrimination rests upon principles of social inclusion and exclusion in no way logically discounts the possibility of justifying universal norms of aesthetic appreciation. The notion of cultural capital no doubt has its uses, but I am not sure how far Bourdieu wishes to push the parallel with economic capital. Both may be regarded as resources used to realize assets. But is this primarily a conceptual parallel, or is there something in the substantive nature of capitalism as such which makes cultural capital, like economic capital,

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peculiarly important in that type of society? Since Bourdieu rarely uses simple formulations where more elaborate ones will serve, for all his gifts his writings leave one with a certain sense of dissatisfaction. Dare one hope that the author might in future develop a rude Anglo-Saxon taste for the unadorned to balance his undoubted Gallic flair?

ANTHONY GIDDENS

FICTIONAL DIETS

A HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY. By José Donoso. Translated by David Pritchard with Suzanne Jill Levine. Alfred A. Knopf. $16.95.
DISTANT RELATIONS. By Carlos Fuentes. Translated by Margaret Sayers Peden. Farrar, Straus, & Giroux. $11.95.

Three years ago in *Partisan Review* (PR1, Vol. XLIX), José Donoso predicted that Latin American novels would be growing slimmer, less greedy in their attempt to regurgitate an entire world. He based his prediction on Manuel Puig, who has indeed continued writing melodramatically pinched narratives—"treatments," in one sense, of larger novels—while dramatizing *Kiss of the Spider Woman* and also writing slender plays like *Under a Mantle of Stars*. In the meantime, Mario Vargas Llosa, between lighter fare, published an engorged *War of the End of the World*, while Carlos Fuentes, after the near bulimia of *Terra Nostra*, turned out a svelte mystery in *The Hydra Head* and, now, in *Distant Relations*, has made an elegantly compacted fable compressing thriller, Jamesian international fable, historical essay, ghost story, and compendium of esthetic allusion (from Borges to Zubarán by way of Hitchcock) into a sliver of split infinities—both Old and New World. Of course, Roa Bastos's masterpiece, *Yo El Supremo*, belatedly approaches us in a translation that will reconstitute our notion of the encyclopedic, post-Joycean novel, but Donoso himself already has served up *A House in the Country*, which was in the works when he made his prediction, and it tips scales with the light-footed grace of obese allegory to confound his own foretelling and outweigh any of his previous works.

Everything distends Donoso's novel, except the abscess of reality—its central, frighteningly absent subject. Thirty-three cousins

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inhabit the Ventura country mansion, playing at playing a fantasy, *La Marquise Est Sortie à Cinq Heures*, which mirrors the adult game of working hard at doing nothing, sumptuously, decadently. Where are the sweets of yesteryear, they all seem to ask, surfeited. Left on their own when their seven sets of parents self-consciously reenact Watteau's *L'Embarquement pour Cuthère*, the children abandon their imposed theatrics and discover sordid society behind the masked rebellion formerly dressed with taffetas, damasks, and operatics of the escapist retreat where all the Venturas live from gold mined and hammered to tissue thinness by natives, who may or may not be cannibals. (Anyhow, many of the dumpling children are "good enough to eat.") Gone for a day—or is it a year?—the elders return to the rebel-ravaged estate, try to sell it off to bumpkin foreigners, and end up huddled on the floor, smothered in pillows and blankets to avoid a suffocating storm of thistledown, as the ever stately, ever discreet, painted figures on the walls look down.

Behind, in front, and all over this *noblesse de façade*—no printed pages behind the thousands of spines in the library; a blind arbiter of decor for the house—the narrator, supplanting any principal character—*any* psychological character at all—seriously enacts the artifice of not telling the novel he is writing. Deliberately protesting too much at every artful turn, Donoso reminds us that all is artifice, pure narrative, opera, painting—*anything* but a chronicle of Latin America, let alone his native Chile—while archly pursing his puppets' lines: "Appearance is the only thing that never lies." Donoso is brilliantly éngagé by disengagement. The more he fancifully fabricates this bouffanted *Lord of the Flies*, the more brutal our realization of its cruel Latin American reality, the greater our awareness of his magisterial triumph in accommodating gothic criticism of pure corruption to the sullied practice of freely contaminated esthetics.

One of many threads to this decorative labyrinth is the children's game, in which each performs a part at once confining and liberating, since each may alter the course of the drama within the confines of the "collective action." The name of the game comes from one of Breton's surrealist manifestos, in which Valéry purportedly asserts that he has not yet written a novel beginning, stupidly and conventionally, that is, "realistically," "La Marquise sortit à cinq heures." In other words, while writing a novel of *la haute bourgeoise*, Donoso has cleared a space for his most impassioned and passionless descriptions, observations, and imaginings, rather like talking eloquently with his mouth full. The result will weary some readers with its *longeurs* and

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obliqueness—at times the reading is like looking at a Gobelin, thread by thread—diddle others with its self-observing trompe l'oeil of cultured allusion, and grind others in studies of literary influence—yes, James and Borges are holy ghosts to this book—and political reference (yes, the lines demand double reading: "collective action" above; or: "'Disappeared?' he asked. 'Disappeared, as in disappeared? Impossible.'"). The more Donoso stuffily flaunts his art for art's sake—"The synthesis produced by reading this novel—I allude to the ground where I allow the imagination of reader and writer to merge—must never be the simulation of any real ground"—the greater his success in creating a genuine simulacrum, at once his theme and technique.

If Donoso's macabre masque doubles decor with denunciation while pretending to do neither—the gold-tipped fence around the Ventura house is made from the subdued natives' lances—Fuentes's leaner chamber work takes the double as pretext, and in the manner of theme and variations, intensively develops its extensive implications in hushed tones. Essentially a *pas de quatre*, with two pairs of fathers and sons named Heredia, framed in the *pas de deux* of a storyteller named Branly on a Proustian quest as narrated by a Jamesian narrator, named Fuentes, *Distant Relations* posits the "correspondence among all things," a Borgesian/Baudelairian universe of wonderful-to-think-so symmetries.

For example, the Latin American son and father are named, respectively, *Victor*, *Hugo*—that multiple madperson who reportedly believed he was himself. Not surprisingly, then, the Mexican Heredias arbitrarily—that is, fatalistically—seek out their French counterparts who merge the boys into a single creature, the one, perhaps, looming over the fictional storyteller and fictionalized author at the novel's end. He stands, as a matter of fact, on a catwalk above a swimming pool, where he evokes nothing so much as Simone Simon, that twin-named actress, played by a wild beast in her most famous scene: the swimming pool in *The Cat People*. The rigorous geometry of Fuentes's super-nature is elaborate, witty, and ponderous; for, if some will dismiss the book as a sociohistoric horror story, gussied up with precious correspondences—ranging from famous French writers who hail from Latin America, like Jules Supervielle, to characters in *Strangers on a Train*, Hitchcock's tennis thriller of murderous doubles—others must see *Distant Relations* as a coolly reflective book on the eternal Latin American question of identity.

Fuentes suggests that humans and their cultures become themselves by dying into their preterite ghosts, who then haunt their pres-

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ent existence. In this novel the New World Heredias are both inheritors and legacy of the Old World Heredias, as their self-same names suggest, and the old French teller of the tale to the Mexican author, who is Fuentes, virtually disincarnates the literary tradition vivified by the younger novelist, both former ambassador to France and Mexican cosmopolite. Transferred to history, as so often done by means of surrealist jump-cuts in this narrative dedicated to Buñuel, the personal narrative looms in vaster images: "The Creole revolutions weren't fought for *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, but to acquire a Napoleon. That was and still is the secret desire of the ruling class of Latin America."

Whether read for such paradoxical acuities or for comparable politics among characters, *Distant Relations* is a fleeting snowflake of unique arrangements, constantly, in its own words, establishing "analogy without sacrificing differentiation." Both Donoso's and Fuentes's books, in fact, are on the cool side, one as if behind the glass of a decorative arts museum, the other under the yellowed lens of a leather-cased magnifier. Both signal their critical signs from afar, challenging their translators (who, for the most part, preserve the required distance) as well as their readers to see more where there is apparently less, affect where there is evidently only effect. If Fuentes's is the more obviously dieted, Donoso's is no less severely regimented. Both are too rich for many readers, still demanding poorer fare.

RONALD CHRIST

TRUTH AND FICTION

HELENE DEUTSCH: A PSYCHOANALYST'S LIFE. By Paul Roazen. Anchor Press/Doubleday. $19.95.

For all her brilliant reputation earlier, Helene Deutsch has not fared well recently. Her two-volume study, *The Psychology of Women*, has been attacked by feminist critics for following too closely on the heels of Freud. Yet as Paul Roazen persuasively argues, and he is not alone—feminist critics are now reevaluating her themselves—there are significant differences between Deutsch's ideas and Freud's: her belief that female narcissism is a source of self-protection, for ex-

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ample, and her distinction between "feminine" and "moral" masochism. The latter, she thought, was far more destructive. Deutsch redefined Freud's concept of feminine passivity as "activity turned inward," and dealt extensively with motherhood when it was not yet considered an appropriate analytic subject. Roazen suggests that Deutsch's "mild-mannered way of expressing herself" kept her from speaking out more strongly against the father of psychoanalysis, as Karen Horney, for example, did. More likely, Deutsch was unwilling to give up her privileged position as daughter—if so, her reputation has suffered for it. Roazen perhaps panders to his audience by accepting without question the now fashionable idea that penis envy is a purely social phenomenon. Nonetheless, he gives a comprehensive account of Deutsch's ideas on women and her other papers as well, on the "as if" personality, for instance, which can function only through identification with others, and on pathological lying, a theme of some significance to us here.

It is not in the presentation of ideas that the problem of Roazen's problematic book lies. Rather it is in the presentation of the life. But because the author is prone to making unreliable statements with regard to biography when he discusses the clinical papers, even his account of Deutsch's ideas is contaminated.

Helene Deutsch was born in the town of Przemysl, Poland, in 1884, the youngest child of the Rosenbach family, which was Jewish. She was the favorite child of her lawyer father, if not of her mother, whom she bitterly resented for her autocratic ways. At the age of fourteen, she met the brilliant and charismatic Herman Lieberman, a leader of the Polish socialist movement. Though he was a married man, fourteen years her senior, they began a long-term relationship, at first platonic, later amorous. When she was in medical school, she met Felix Deutsch, a specialist in internal medicine, and married him in 1912. They had one son, Martin, now a professor at MIT. Helene Deutsch joined Freud's circle and began an analysis with him in 1918. By 1924 she had become the president of the highly prestigious Training Institute of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. However, in 1935, the Deutsches left for America, where they became leading figures in Boston's psychoanalytic community.

All of this is cited in Deutsch's delightful autobiography, *Confrontations*, which appeared in 1973.

One might wonder why Helene Deutsch turned over her papers to Roazen in 1978 for this "authorized biography," given that

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his earlier book *Brother Animal* had blamed Freud for the suicide of her patient Victor Tausk, an account she could hardly have sympathized with. Perhaps a partial answer lies in *Confrontations*, published nine years after the death of Felix Deutsch, to whose loss, she writes, she was never reconciled: "'Loneliness' is a word everyone thinks he understands. I have come to my own precise definition: that person is lonely who has no one for whom he or she is Number One." I would suggest that in 1978 Deutsch felt that for Roazen she was number one. What other suitor could she expect at the age of ninety-three? (She died in 1982 at the age of ninety-seven.)

"Are biographies a form of fiction?" asks Leon Edel in his book *Writing Lives*. "Some critics hold this belief. But they are wrong. . . . Novelists have omniscience. Biographers never do. The personages exist; they are the 'givens' to a writer of lives. They may not be altered. To alter is to disfigure. . . . It is the task of critics to unmask the perjurers."

The fact is that Roazen gives us less biography than fiction. There is a diary, for example, that Roazen passes off as Deutsch's, without even suggesting the possibility that it might be someone else's. But the manuscript, which is in Radcliffe College's Schlesinger Library, bears the words "Christenens Erlebnisse," (*Christine's Life Experiences*), engraved in gold on its green leather binding. The first page speaks of the author's great delight at receiving this diary for her twelfth birthday. She was born, she says, on May 17, 1888. Helene Deutsch was born on October 9, four years earlier than the girl in the journal, whose entries are full of topical references to Vienna and Grundlsee (a resort town). This does not discourage Roazen, however, who insists that these are ruses and that Deutsch purposely covered her tracks. The entries at the end of the diary four years later consist of letters by a love-struck adolescent to the famous Viennese actor Josef Kainz. But Roazen claims they are really about the socialist political leader Herman Lieberman. Besides, he continues, the diary was meant to be a kind of novel.

Even if we accept the idea that the sixteen-year-old Helene Deutsch set out to write a novel, in journal and epistolary form no less, about a Catholic heroine, four years younger and far more docile than herself, and that she kept up the entries for four years—which is what Roazen asks us to believe—would she have done so in a foreign language? Roazen says that Deutsch's German was always idiosyncratic, but there is no evidence of this in the diary. Furthermore, there is much use of Viennese dialect—some-

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thing that would not have been taught in Polish schools. The simplest explanation for all these problems, plus a handwriting that bears no resemblance to that of the older Deutsch, is that the diary was written by someone else. Helene Deutsch's cupboard, I'm told, was full of unpublished materials by analysands, patients, and colleagues, as well as by her. But such an admission would mean that Roazen would have to give up one of his most colorful "finds." Indeed, it turns out that the diary is by the person whose name appears in it, Christine Fournier, later known as Christine Olden (her married name), an actress who became an analyst and wrote on such subjects as empathy, narcissism, and child development.

Also questionable, if not worse, is Roazen's use of case material for his own purposes, to "prove," for example, that Felix Deutsch was homosexual before his marriage. Anyone who takes the trouble to read "A Case of Hen Phobia," the study in question, side by side with Roazen's account of it would be shocked by Roazen's abuse of sources, which he then builds on with incremental repetition throughout the book. Roazen claims that in this study of manifest homosexuality, Deutsch "put a paragraph about 'another case'," which actually describes her husband. This is nonsense. The paragraph Roazen cites doesn't mention "another case" because it is describing the same case, that of the young man with the hen phobia. Roazen's quotation is accurate, but highly selective. It omits the beginning where Deutsch tells us that the patient came to her for an analysis, which she then goes on to describe at length.

The young man of the case study was an aspiring actor, which Roazen claims is a disguise for Felix Deutsch, once an aspiring musician. Since Deutsch describes the would-be actor as having "small capacity for love," Roazen then uses this as evidence of Felix Deutsch's emotional inadequacies. Perhaps it is possible, though highly unlikely, that the correct Felix Deutsch had an active homosexual involvement with his close friend Paul Barnay, but Roazen's distortions here and elsewhere by no means prove it. More likely their friendship was one of those close bonds with no overt sexual content that were so pervasive in the Romantic movement and later.

Although Roazen conveys something of the richness and complexity of Helene Deutsch's personality—her combination of feminist behavior and traditionally feminine feeling—he makes Felix Deutsch sound like an emotional misfit, a dandy who contributed little to his profession. In fact, he was the author of several highly respected books (primarily in the field of psychosomatic medicine)

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and, according to the members of the Boston psychoanalytic community I spoke to, its most beloved member.

It's not that Roazen doesn't say some of this; it's that he constantly undercuts it. Far from conveying a sense of impartiality, his prose has a push-pull effect that is disturbing. Reading this book is like taking a ride through a beautiful city and constantly being jolted by sudden shifts of direction and twists in the road. The quotations from the unpublished letters are fascinating. Yet given Roazen's distorting omissions, one must wonder how reliable they are, particularly since his inferences from the material he does cite are often skewed. At the end of the book, Roazen thanks several people for help with translations from the Polish and German, but just who is responsible for what is unclear. One would have hoped for clearer documentation in general.

Much of what Roazen has to say is banal, as in this statement about Lieberman: "Had the relationship worked out, her whole life would have been different." This might be said of just about anyone. Besides, the relationship didn't "work out," as Roazen puts it, because it drew its emotional sustenance from precisely what prevented its gratification: Oedipal prohibition in Deutsch's case and the need for sacrifice in Lieberman's.

Whatever his motivation, Roazen always opts for more rather than less, be it seduction, adultery, abortion, homosexuality. One might counter that he had Deutsch herself as a witness. But we have to ask at what point interviews become interrogations, particularly for a person of her age. The questions, I'm told, eventually had to be stopped by the family because Roazen's insistence upset Deutsch so much.

In his book *Talent and Genius*, Kurt Eissler, the revered psychoanalyst, contested Roazen's reading of Victor Tausk's suicide (a response which Roazen ignores in the account that he largely repeats here). Now we need someone to correct Roazen's reading of Deutsch's life.

ELAINE HOFFMAN BARUCH

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IMPERFECTLY TAMED

FROST: A LITERARY LIFE RECONSIDERED. By William H. Pritchard. Oxford University Press. $15.95.

Those who love the poetry of Robert Frost have been chafing for years at the hostile tendentiousness of Lawrance Thompson's three-volume biography, completed after Thompson's death by his student R. H. Winnick. This massive and disproportionately influential work (hereinafter called The Biography) stands squarely in the way of a complete understanding of Frost—all the more confusingly because it contains quantities of information straight from the poet's mouth, information turned in the hand of The Biographer, like an unfamiliar tool, to prosy misapprehension. The Biographer, for reasons I think more his fault than Frost's, gave his best shot to damping down Frost's life with obtuse and categorical moral disapproval. Moreover, if ever a prose work acted as the enemy of poetry, this was it. Frost, of course, chose The Biographer himself, but no good deed goes unpunished, and Frost may never recover from its uncalled-for revenge. (*The lovely shall be choosers, shall they?/Then let them choose!*)

William H. Pritchard, in a book-length essay, has to some considerable degree redressed the balance. Pritchard has helped to heal the relation between Frost's poetry and his experience. The three most discerning books on Frost have all been written by Amherst men: Reuben Brower, Richard Poirier, and now William H. Pritchard. In the Amherst manner, Pritchard reads Frost extremely well, but he respects the art of poetry more than the art of biography and therefore modestly avoids the challenge to become the New Biographer. He deliberately chooses for his book the subscript, "reconsideration," a reconsideration of Frost's life, of The Biography, and of a "literary life" (whatever those words may connote) all at once. In counterbalance to The Biography, Pritchard's essay does more to reconsider the literary output of Frost's life than to reconsider the events of the life itself. He has worked to reread rather than to reexplore. A new biography of Frost will probably have to await the demise of a generation of "friends of Marse Robert," as Allen Tate once wickedly called them, friends who prefer contracting to defend Frost than expanding to comprehend him. Frost chose these friends too, saying he wanted to be understood, but to be understood *wrong.*

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Pritchard's Reconsideration differs especially from Thompson's Biography in its reliance on the ear. (Thompson was badly handicapped by having no ear.) Pritchard hears Frost extremely well. Frost's poetry, as well as his character, were to be comprehended especially through the sound of his voice, as anyone who heard him in life or has listened carefully to recordings will acknowledge. His life, more even than that of most poets, was (to use his own words about E. A. Robinson) "a revel in the felicities of language." He reached out to readers and listeners through cadence, through the sound of a voice all his own. "Eye readers we call them. They can get the meaning by glances. But they are bad readers because they miss the best part of what a good writer puts into his work." Pritchard fully comprehends and conveys the way Frost made himself up as he went along, the air of improvisation that flavored his conversation. It lay at the heart of his notion of poetry. "Like a piece of ice on a hot stove a poem must ride on its own melting." "It is the mind skating circles around itself as it moves forward."

Pritchard seizes on this improvisational truth about Frost (a way of inventing truth that The Biographer, literal as always, usually suspected to be an irresponsible lie) and quotes Frost in the epigraph to his very first chapter: "I'm guessing at myself, you know; guessing at ourselves. The beauty of it is the lambent way the mind plays over that guessing." He follows George Whicher, another Amherst professor who wrote about Frost, reliably recollecting the way Frost made conversation: "As he talked, he seemed to be constantly inviting his audience to help him find just the right form of words. He spoke slowly, often rolling up a phrase with many heaves as though it were a stone. . . . We felt that we were watching an arduous creative triumph, the shaping into form of ideas drawn from the dark abyss. . . ."

Pritchard keeps Frost's vitality always before the reader, and it gives his criticism of Frost's work special authority. His chapter on *North of Boston* does something rarely accomplished by critics: it takes into account the passage of time as a driving force in narrative poetry. This is the Amherst way at its best: look and listen for the poet's language; don't trust the gossip of recorded history. Thus The Reconsideration does not venture deeply into biography, does not encroach upon intimate reservations, does not invade Frost's jealously guarded privacy farther than in quoting letters written to friends. Pritchard's achievement is to recognize and cherish in Frost the power that he barely kept under control, the spirit imperfectly

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tamed, the sense of mischief that kept breaking out of bounds, "this wildness whereof it is spoken . . . an equal claim with sound to being a poem's better half," those forces that do not love a wall.

PETER DAVISON

LATER AND ELSEWHERE

LATER THE SAME DAY. By Grace Paley. Farrar, Straus, & Giroux. $13.95.

ELSEWHERE. By Jonathan Strong. Ballantine. $4.95.

Grace Paley continues to create an unfamiliar, and therefore uncomfortable, literary space. She is formally innovative but outside recognizable avant-garde or experimental traditions. She is leftist and feminist, but the mainspring of her fiction is not polemical; moreover, she avoids both the nineteenth-century realist forms of the earnestly, coherently political and the postmodern absurd-grotesque of the satirically, anarchically political. Her stories are rife with the full-blown emotion unavailable (to be kind) to most contemporary "serious" American fiction by younger writers, but that emotion, subjected to the complex dislocations of her sophisticated forms, has nothing in common with the visceral experience offered by bestsellers. Paley's forms do not announce themselves as sophisticated, however, unlike those of an older generation—Paley's own—of "serious" (male) American fiction writers. On the contrary, her stories, in their aleatory digressiveness, appear casually structured, almost formless (needless to say, they are carefully if unconventionally structured). Paley, a true "cultural dreamer," succeeds in uniting the most productive literary and political counties of what otherwise appear the blighted and divided realms of contemporary American fiction. As she says herself in "The Expensive Moment":

> But the evening belonged to the Chinese artists and writers. . . . All sorts of American cultural workers were invited. Some laughed to hear themselves described in this way. They were accustomed to being called "dreamer poet realist postmodernist." They might have liked being called "cultural dreamer," but no one had thought of that yet.

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Later the Same Day is exactly that: the next installment in the story; same and similar characters, older; same world, evolved (regressed) historically from the political moment (late 50s, 60s) of the two earlier volumes, *The Little Disturbances of Man* and *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute.* The fabulous utopian optimism of those books—of the 60s itself, *the* putative and failed "enormous change at the last minute" of Western culture—is largely gone. In place of youth's and revolution's passionate hope is the straightforward, steady determination of middle age and of the antinuclear, ecological, wretchedly impotent contemporary American left. As Faith says in "Anxiety," to a young father insufficiently kind to his child:

> Son, I said, leaning another two, three dangerous inches toward him. Son, I must tell you that madmen intend to destroy this beautifully made planet. That the murder of our children by these men has got to become a terror and a sorrow to you, and starting now, it had better interfere with any daily pleasure.

Nonetheless, characteristically for Paley, "Anxiety" begins and ends with evocations of hope: spring, a window box of marigolds, Faith sitting in the "nice light." The world (the story, this particular life, and this, and this) isn't over yet. But the father of "A Conversation With My Father" (*Enormous Changes*) has gotten his wish: "Tragedy! You too. When will you look it in the face?" Paley has. The stories of the current volume, though situated within personal and social hope, are dominated tonally by despair: death, loss, betrayal, fear. The earlier stories affirmed and made us feel hope in the face of despair. These stories feel the despair, and hope has become a matter of conviction rather than impulse: "They were all . . . ideologically, spiritually, and on puritanical principle against despair" ("Ruthy and Edie").

As that sentence should indicate, Paley's writing in *Later the Same Day*, independent of its more raging apocalyptic than flooding utopian cultural dreaming, is, if anything, even better than before:

> She had often thought of the way wide air lives and moves in a man's chest. Then it's strummed into shape by the short-stringed voice box to become a wonderful secondary sexual characteristic. ("Dreamer in a Dead Language.")

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Interwoven as they are with one another and, as personal, fictional and social history, with the two earlier books, these stories fabricate a rich, surprising, teeming, enlightening, devastating and uplifting fictional universe.

Elsewhere, Jonathan Strong's new novel (his previous books are *Tike* and *Ourselves*), occupies the same fictional space, where sophisticated, self-conscious, stylized form, intense emotion, and engaged reflection on/of contemporary life, fully cognizant of the complexities of mimesis in our time, manage, defying faction and false historical inevitability, to accommodate one another. Paley's world is Jewish radical New York, in its various, often troubled allegiances with immigrant parents and the contemporary oppressed. Strong's is Catholic working-class Somerville, Massachusetts, the unnamed setting so powerfully evoked in this novel, and its mutually devastating involvement with alienated, deracinated middle-American WASPdom in the person of the narrator, Burt. Passive but somehow far too influential, Burt was everyone's best high school teacher, who "had" all the working-class teenage characters in his English classes. As Burt himself mysteriously tells us in the novel's third paragraph: "I had all of them in high school, him and his sister, and the baby thief, and Nell too."

"Him" turns out to be Anthony Ognissanti, orphan and gifted writer, around whom the other lives of the novel, and the novel itself, revolve (the four sections of *Elsewhere* have the same titles as the four works by Anthony written within the time covered by each section). The novel explores the mixed, ambiguous consequences of Burt's excessive, selfish/selfless involvement with Anthony and the other former students. It does so with a masterful fusion of empathy—passion, really—and scrupulous detachment: the narrative voice, particularly, is cool, self-contained, understated. The structure draws our attention with its self-reflexive, Nabokovian complexity. Like Paley's, Strong's writing distracts us from its emotional dynamite with its highly satisfying formal sophistication and self-consciousness, its "craftedness," all the better to ignite the fuse when we least expect it.

I won't go into detail about the plot, beyond affirming that, as hinted in the sentence quoted, the theft of a baby is one of its central mysteries, because to do so is to mislead about the overall impact of the novel (there is additional mysterious disappearance, as well as untimely death, and a great deal of multidirectional sexual entangle-

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ment). At the same time that we enjoy this irresistible fictional material, we are also caught up in the tonal-perspectival-evaluative complexity of the narration (just when we think we know what's going on, with story, character and point of view, everything shifts; we learn something new, or we are reminded of something we have forgotten; we must reassess). The mysteries and sexual complications of the plot are absorbed and transmuted, therefore, by the parallel epistemological and moral complexity of the narrative. And the book is un-put-downable, a stunningly good read.

MARIANNE DEKOVEN

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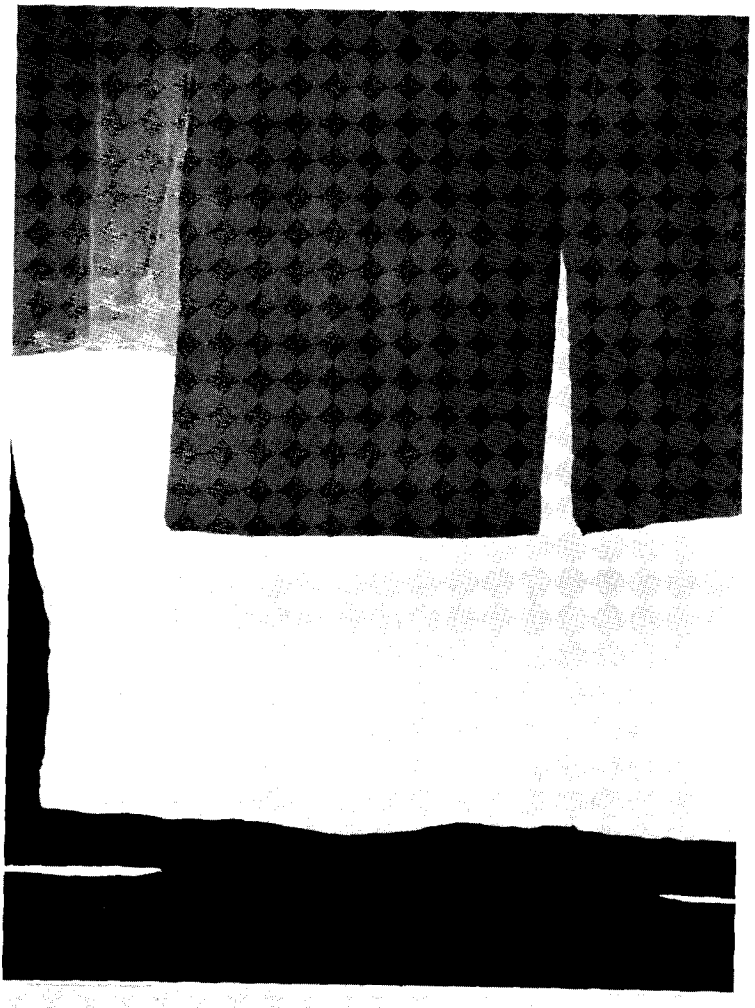

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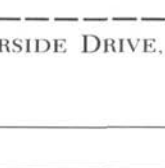
Winter 1986

MICHAEL WALZER'S 'EXODUS & REVOLUTION'
A CANAANITE READING
by Edward W. Said

NEWS ETHICS
PRESS & JERKS
by Robert Sherrill

With stories, poems and articles by Alice Munro, Douglas Dunn, Susan Minot, W. S. Merwin, Thomas McGuane, Gary Giddins and many others in the winter issue.



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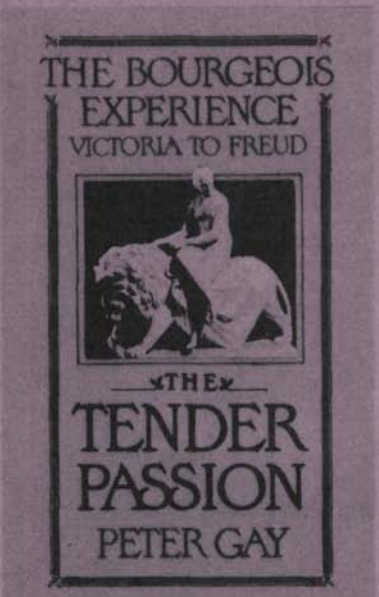
The Tender Passion

Vol. II of The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud

PETER GAY



Education of the Senses, the first volume of Peter Gay's *The Bourgeois Experience*, was published in 1984 to enormous critical acclaim—and controversy. Now, in *The Tender Passion*, Gay continues his eloquent, psychoanalytically informed exploration of the Victorian era and its middle classes.

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